

Religious Worldview in Your Name (Kimi no na wa.):

Exploring the Symbolism of “Musubi” (knotting) and “Sukui” (salvation)

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(Received: February 27, 2024; Revised: August 9, 2024; Accepted: August 13, 2024)

Abstract

This study aims to elucidate the religious worldview in the globally acclaimed 2016 animated film *Your Name*. (君の名は。 *Kimi no na wa.*). It focuses on the themes of “Musubi” (結び, knotting) and “Sukui” (救い, salvation) depicted in the work, analyzing them from the perspective of Japanese folklore and folk religion. While acknowledging the film's post-3.11 (Great East Japan Earthquake) context, this research challenges critical views suggesting that the work implicitly reproduces assumptions of “men saving women” or “big cities saving rural areas.” The methodology adopts an interdisciplinary approach, treating the film as a cultural text and combining textual analysis with theories of Japanese folklore studies and narrative analysis. The study examines how “Musubi” (knotting) and “Sukui” (salvation) are established through narrative structures, character designs, and symbolic expressions, also considering connections to classical texts like the *Kojiki* (古事記, the oldest existing historical record) and the *Manyōshū* (万葉集, the oldest existing anthology of Japanese poetry). The analysis reveals that the film skillfully establishes a complex network of “Musubi” (knotting) to achieve “Sukui” (salvation) through various elements including “Kotodama” (言霊, word spirit), mythological contexts, and rites of passage. Contrary to conventional interpretations, the findings indicate that “Musubi” (knotting) and “Sukui” (salvation) result from diverse forms of communication and connections based on overall harmony and cooperation grounded in a religious worldview. This research demonstrates how the film functions as a cultural text reflecting traditional knowledge of “Sukui” (salvation) for human crises in the modern context. It contributes to understanding how traditional Japanese concepts can respond to contemporary societal issues, opening new paths for exploring the dialogue between contemporary popular culture and traditional wisdom.

Keywords: Religious Worldview; *Your Name* (君の名は。 *Kimi no na wa.*); “Musubi” (結び, knotting); “Sukui” (救い, salvation); Japanese folklore

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1. Background and rationale

This paper aims to deepen the understanding of the multifaceted layers and implicit religious motifs present in the globally acclaimed animated film *Your Name*. (君の名は。 *Kimi no na wa*. 2016: In this paper, I will refer to it as *Your Name* without the period in the title). The narrative intricately weaves a tale of love and destiny through the experiences of Mitsuha Miyamizu (宮水三葉), a shrine maiden living in a rural town, and Taki Tachibana (立花瀧), a high school student from Tokyo, as they grapple with a body-switch phenomenon while attempting to defy a tragic fate prophesied by a comet.

Scholarly discussions revolving around *Your Name* span diverse perspectives. Some studies explore its historical context and directorial techniques (Swale, 2018)² while others examine its impact on tourism for “Seichi-junrei” (聖地巡礼, sacred site pilgrimage³) and cultural landscapes (Okata et al., 2020; Osada & Tomono, 2019).⁴

Moreover, scholarly discourse transcends the cinematic elements of *Your Name*, linking the narrative to broader societal events such as the Great East Japan Earthquake on March 11, 2011 (DiNitto, 2018; Thelen, 2019; Sadakane, 2016). These studies examine the film's metaphorical representation of resilience and recovery amidst disaster, drawing connections to the earthquake and its aftermath. Particularly noteworthy is Teng's analysis, which adds a distinctive perspective by exploring the film's portrayal of time, memory, and mediation in the context of the 2011 national disaster. His examination positions mind-game tropes such as body switch and time travel within varying timescales, prompting reflection on the intersection of historical rescue and fate in *Your Name*. (Teng 2022).⁵

As these studies emphasize, *Your Name* was created with a consciousness of the 2011 disaster, inherently addressing the theme of human salvation from crisis. However, Sadakane (2016; 2021) problematized the contextual structure of this “Sukui” (救い, salvation, word often used in religious contexts to describe spiritual or physical salvation in Japan) narrative, criticizing how it is portrayed as being brought about by men or urban areas. This critical view suggests that the film implicitly reproduces the assumption of “men saving women” or “big cities saving rural areas” while alluding to the concept of “salvation” in the aftermath of the Great East Japan Earthquake.

However, it is crucial to question whether this perspective attributing “Sukui” (salvation) to the superiority of men and cities is one-sided. Isn't “Sukui” (salvation) from crisis rather rooted in bonds and “Musubi” (結び, knotting, a Japanese term meaning “to knot” or “to tie,” which in the context of Japanese beliefs refers to the interconnectedness of all things) created through more diverse forms of connection and communication? This paper, starting from such an assumption, aims to explore the Japanese religious worldview expressed in *Your Name*. It seeks to understand this worldview beyond the conventional binary interpretations of “Sukui” (salvation), delving into more complex layers. By analyzing the concept of “Musubi”

² Swale compares Japanese anime director Shinkai to Hayao Miyazaki, noting Shinkai's ability to blend traditional anime elements with modern aesthetics and digital techniques (Swale 2018, p. 270).

³ “Seichi-Junrei” (聖地巡礼, sacred places) refers to pilgrimages to locations featured in anime. These pilgrimages often lead to unique interactions between visitors and local communities, as seen in various studies (Iwasaki et al., 2018; Katayama, 2013; Okamoto, 2013; Tai, 2021; Yamamura, 2009). In the context of *Your Name*, these pilgrimages tend to be relatively light (Okata et al., 2020).

⁴ Hida City, the setting of *Your Name*, has actively promoted itself as a tourist destination, encouraging both local awareness and external interest (Osada & Tomono, 2019).

⁵ Teng argues that *Your Name* uses the body switch motif to explore binary oppositions such as city/country, tradition/modernity, and male/female (Teng, 2022, p. 464).

(knotting), which brings about “Sukui” (salvation), from the perspective of Japanese folklore and folk religion, we aim to explore new possibilities for interpreting *Your Name*.⁶

2. Objective

The purpose of this study is to uncover the religious worldview embedded in *Your Name* through a textual analysis based on the perspectives of Japanese folklore and folk religion. Specifically, by focusing on the core concepts of “Musubi” (knotting) and “Sukui” (salvation) in the work, we aim to elucidate the following: 1. How “Musubi” (knotting) is symbolically manifested in the film's narrative structure and character interactions. 2. How the film's depiction of “Sukui” (salvation) transcends conventional binary interpretations.

Through this analysis, we aim to expand on previous interpretations that critically view the concept of “Sukui” (salvation) in *Your Name* from a binary perspective of gender or urban-rural dichotomies. Furthermore, we will demonstrate how this work functions as a cultural text that bridges traditional ideas with contemporary societal challenges.

3. Methodology

This study adopts an interdisciplinary approach, treating *Your Name* as a cultural text and combining folk religion theory with narrative analysis to examine it. The research methods include:

- 1) Folk Religion Theory Analysis: Examining how traditional Japanese religious concepts, particularly “Musubi” (knotting) and “Sukui” (salvation), are expressed in the film.
- 2) Narrative Structure Analysis: Exploring how Japanese folk religious concepts are woven into the plot, character development, and symbolic expressions. Connections to classical texts such as the *Kojiki* (古事記, the oldest existing historical record) and *Manyoshu* (万葉集, the oldest existing anthology of Japanese poetry) are taken into consideration⁷.

Through these methods, this study aims to reveal the religious worldview embedded in *Your Name* and explore its potential as a cultural text that reflects traditional knowledge in addressing contemporary crises.

⁶ Notable studies in this field include Thomas (2012), who examined manga and anime from the perspective of monotheistic doctrines; Komura (2022), who explored Japanese religiosity through anime; Masaki (2002) who studied religion in Hayao Miyazaki's films; and Kawakatsu (2013), who analyzed *Spirited Away* (千と千尋の神隠し, *Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi*) from a religious perspective, demonstrating how the film harnesses religious power through the restoration of fallen gods. These studies show that religion, animism, and religious motifs are frequently used in anime and offer deeper insights into the works. There remains considerable room for debate and further research in exploring religious symbolism in anime.

⁷ The *Kojiki* is a historical and mythological text written in 712 AD. It records events from the Age of the Gods to the reign of Empress Suiko and consists of three volumes. Its purpose was to provide historical proof of the legitimacy of imperial rule. The *Manyoshu* is the oldest surviving collection of Japanese waka poetry. It is believed to have been compiled in the late 8th century and consists of 20 volumes. It contains poems by emperors, nobles, government officials, border guards, courtesans, and commoners, representing a broad spectrum of Japanese society.

4. Research results

4.1 *Your Name* and “Musubi” (knotting)

4.1.1 Synopsis of *Your Name*

The narrative of *Your Name* is divided into four main parts:

1) Initiation and Acceptance of the Body-Switch:

The narrative portrays the lives of Mitsuha Miyamizu, a shrine maiden from Itomori town in Hida's mountainous region, and Taki Tachibana, a high school student residing in Yotsuya, Tokyo. Their unexpected exchange of bodies commences one morning in 2016, exemplifying the concept of “Musubi” (knotting) through their spiritual connection. Initially dismissing it as a “strange dream,” they gradually come to terms with the reality of their body-switch, embracing and adapting to this irregular occurrence in their lives.

2) Disconnection and the Revelation:

Their body switch abruptly stops, leading Taki to search for Mitsuha in Itomori town. He discovers that Mitsuha passed away three years ago in the Comet Tiamat disaster, and realizes that their connection transcends time.

3) “Sukui” (salvation) to avert a catastrophe:

By drinking the “Kuchikamisake” (口噛み酒, mouth-chewed sake, a traditional Shinto ritual offering) made by Mitsuha in Iwakura (磐座, a rock where the god is enshrined), the “Body” of Miyamizu Shrine, Taki gains the special power “Musubi” (knotting) and transfers it into Mitsuha's body on the morning of the comet's fall. In Mitsuha's body, Taki strategizes with her friends to save Itomori town. Simultaneously, Mitsuha, in Taki's body in 2016, witnesses Itomori town being destroyed by the comet.

Taki in 2013 and Mitsuha in 2016 meet at the caldera during “Kataware doki” (かたわれ時, twilight or magic hour) a liminal time beyond conventional space-time boundaries. They discuss the evacuation strategy for Itomori town. They try to write each other's names on their hands, but when “Kataware doki” (magic hour) ends, they can no longer see each other. All that remains on Mitsuha's hand are Taki's words, “I love you.” Inspired by Taki's message, Mitsuha leads a successful “Sukui” (salvation) effort. However, both wake up with no memory of their deep connection.

4) The Destined Meeting:

After the disaster, both Taki and Mitsuha feel a profound absence but do not recognize each other. Years later, they meet by chance on a passing train. They rush out of the station, search the streets of Tokyo, and finally meet on the stairs where Taki is going up and Mitsuha is going down. They pass each other once, but then Taki turns around and calls out to Mitsuha, asking, “Haven't we met? (01:40:30).” Mitsuha replies, “I thought so too! (01:40:43).” Despite their memory loss, they feel a deep connection and ask each other, “Your name is...? (01:40:49),” seeking to reclaim the bond they once shared. The story concludes on a touching note, suggesting that their souls have recognized each other beyond the confines of time and memory, embodying the film's overarching theme of “Musubi” (knotting) and the enduring nature of spiritual connections in Japanese folklore.

4.1.2 Representation of “Musubi” (knotting)

Your Name, the concept of “Musubi” (knotting) holds profound significance, embodying the interconnectedness of various elements within the storyline. This film intricately weaves the concept into its themes and symbolism, particularly evident through insightful dialogues and symbolic moments.

A pivotal instance elucidating the essence of “Musubi” (knotting) occurs as Mitsuha's grandmother imparts wisdom to Mitsuha and her sister, Yotsuha, at the Miyamizu Shrine. The grandmother explains:

Musubi is the old way of calling the local guardian god. This word has profound meaning. Tying thread is Musubi. Connecting people is Musubi. The flow of time is Musubi. These are all god's power. So the braided cords that we make are the god's art and represent the flow of time itself. They converge and take shape. They twist, tangle, sometimes unravel, break, then connect again. Musubi - knotting. That's time (00:34:23-00:35:07).

With these words, the grandmother, a repository of traditional knowledge, explains the multiple meanings of “Musubi” (knotting), a term that refers not only to the local tutelary deity, but also to the act of connecting threads, people, and the passage of time itself.

The concept of “Musubi” (knotting) is further expanded during a poignant moment of tea sharing between Mitsuha and Yotsuha (00:35:09-00:35:28). The grandmother says, “Whether it be water, rice, or *sake* when a person consumes something and it joins their soul, that's Musubi. So, today's offering is an important custom that connects god and people (00:35:20-00:35:36).” These words highlight the significance of offerings, particularly “Kuchikamisake” (mouth-chewed sake), in forging connections between humans and deities. This ceremonial drink, carefully prepared by Mitsuha and Yotsuha, acts as the catalyst for the body-switch phenomenon between Taki and Mitsuha, symbolizing the divine essence of “Musubi” (knotting).

The scene where Taki eats Onigiri or Omusubi (おにぎり、おむすび, rice ball) in the mountain cave near the “body” of Miyamizu Shrine’s god (00:58:10-00:58:16) is laden with deep symbolism in *Your Name*. The term “Omusubi” (rice ball) directly connects to “Musubi” (knotting), reflecting the concept of binding or uniting, which is central to the film's themes. This concept is further linked to the Kamimusubi god (カミムスビの神), a deity from the *Kojiki* (the oldest existing historical record), known for generating spiritual power and creating all things. According to folklorist Miyake (1989: 384), the Kamimusubi god is a divine entity responsible for the creation and harmonization of the world. Thus, Taki's act of eating “Omusubi” transcends mere sustenance, symbolizing the spiritual invocation of the power of “Musubi” (knotting) and its role in the formation and strengthening of connections.⁸

The significance of the setting where the rice balls were consumed, a cave, cannot be overstated. This act of seclusion, or “Komoru” (籠る, to seclude oneself), echoes a prominent theme from the *Kojiki*, particularly in the story of Amaterasu (天照大御神, the supreme sun

⁸ In the film, after a shot of him eating a rice ball, Taki sees the braided cords (symbol of “Musubi” (knotting)) around his wrist and explains about “Musubi” (knotting) that “They converge and take shape. They twist, tangle, sometimes unravel, then connect again...Musubi-knotting. That's time (00:58:18-00:58:33).” In the explanation also shows the spider's thread, leaves dripping with water and the two lakes of Itomori town. These are symbols of “Musubi” (knotting). They are treated at the same level in the scene as the rice balls, emphasizing the symbolism of the rice balls.

goddess). After the transgressions of her younger brother, Susano (素戔鳴尊, the storm god), Amaterasu secluded herself in a cave, resulting in darkness and a pause in the world's cycles. This act symbolizes a “death” phase preceding the “rebirth” of the world, which is renewed when Amaterasu exits her seclusion, bringing light back to the world.

In this context, Taki's act of seclusion in a cave while eating “Omusubi” (rice ball), as depicted in *Your Name*, mirrors this mythological motif. It symbolizes an essential step towards renewal or regeneration, reflecting the transition from symbolic death to rebirth as illustrated in Amaterasu's story in the *Kojiki*. Within *Your Name*, Taki consuming Omusubi in a cave signifies his reception of divine power during a critical moment of transformation, culminating in the realization of “Musubi” (knotting).

4.1.3 Representation of “Kataware” (かたわれ, Half-Light)

Your Name introduces the profound concept of “Kataware” (かたわれ, half-light), illustrating fragments of something once whole and implying an incomplete state seeking connection. The notion of “Kataware” (half-light) captures moments and spaces where the boundaries between worlds blur, fostering connections across different realms. “Tasogare” (たそがれ) or “Kataware doki” (かたわれ時), the Japanese terms for twilight or magic hour, embody this concept by depicting times when realms intersect, creating a phase of ambiguity. The film symbolically represents “Kataware” (half-light) through various narrative elements, such as the twilight scenes that signify the merging of Taki and Mitsuha's worlds, underscoring the theme of connection despite physical and temporal separation.

The recurring imagery of the moon throughout the story serves as a symbolic representation of the protagonists' states. Initially, the moon, divided into light and dark segments within a circle, symbolizes the duality of their relationship (Fig. 1). However, in a pivotal scene before the comet's impact on Mitsuha's town, Taki loses the ability to switch bodies, resulting in the intersection of power lines against a full moon (Fig. 2), metaphorically signifying that the two characters are divided as “Kataware” (half-light).

In subsequent scenes, after their exchange has ceased, the lunar representation changes from a full moon divided into segments to a single crescent moon, signifying the absence of their divided connection (Fig. 3). This symbolic transition corresponds to their separation and the loss of their intertwined state.

After Mitsuha survives the comet's fall, the image changes from a crescent to a full moon. However, since the two have lost their memories, they have not yet met. Therefore, as shown in Fig.4, a power line crosses the moon, symbolizing the separation of the two people.

Moreover, motifs and symbols within the film further emphasize the concept of “Kataware” (half-light). For example, Taki's jumper, adorned with a shadow mark symbolizing yin and yang, alongside a T-shirt featuring a half-moon and the words “HALF MOON,” symbolize the fragmented connection between the characters, as illustrated in Fig.5 and Fig.6.

Fig. 1: A round moon divided into bright and dark parts.

Fig 2: The moon divided into two parts.

(In Fig. 1, the moon is drawn in a circle with dark and light parts, showing that the two people are one. In Fig. 2, an electric wire runs through the center of the moon, dividing it into two parts.)



(Your Name. 00:02:06)



(Your Name. 00:44:26)

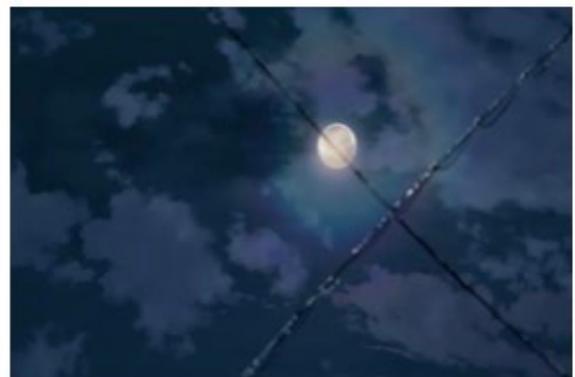
Fig. 3: Half moon.

Fig. 4: The moon divided into two parts.

(In Fig. 3, only the bright parts are drawn, indicating that Mitsuha is no longer in this world. Fig. 4 shows that the moon has become round due to the relief, but the two people have not yet met.)



(Your Name. 00:56:22)



(Your Name. 01:36:22)

Fig. 5: Taki's jumper with the Yin and Yang sign on the shoulder.

Fig. 6: Taki's T-shirt with a picture of a half moon and "HALF MOON" written on it.



(Your Name. 00:46:15)



(Your Name. 00:48:51)

Additionally, specific locations, such as the "body" of Miyamizu Shrine's god situated in the vast caldera (00:35:47-00:36:02), streams flowing within the caldera (00:36:03-00:36:19), sacred trees (00:34:40-00:34:46), the torii (鳥居, shrine gate) of the shrine, the pedestrian bridge (00:29:53-00:30:07 etc.), and the stairs where Mitsuha and Taki finally meet (01:39:53-01:40:50), possess liminal qualities.

These elements explicitly signify their roles as thresholds between different realms or worlds, underscoring the theme of “Kataware” (half-light) and illustrating the blurred boundaries between worlds. This collective emphasis on the theme demonstrates not only the characters' fragmented connection but also their journey towards reintegration.

4.2 Mechanism for Establishing “Musubi” (knotting)

4.2.1 Symbolism of Characters and Places

Your Name skillfully integrates symbolism into its characters and settings, weaving a rich tapestry that underscores the film's central theme of “Musubi” (knotting). The names of the protagonists, Mitsuha Miyamizu and Taki Tachibana, carry deep symbolic meanings. Mitsuha's name resonates with the water deity Mitsuhanomenokami (罔象女神, goddess of water), in the *Kojiki*, emphasizing the Miyamizu family's deep connection to water. The family name Miyamizu (宮水), combining “miya” (宮, shrine) and “mizu” (水, water), signifies their lineage's ties to a “shrine related to water.” This connection is further illustrated when the grandmother recounts the history of the Miyamizu Shrine and mentions a stream that runs beneath their home (00:13:10-00:13:41), thereby reinforcing the thematic focus on water as a symbol of life and renewal that is integral to “Musubi” (knotting).

The Miyamizu Shrine, with its roots stretching back a millennium in Itomori town, is dedicated to the water deity, a reverence that likely began after the creation of Lake Itomori following a comet's impact 1,200 years ago. The shrine's rituals, including Kagura dances (神楽, a ceremonial dance in Shinto rituals) (00:14:32-00:15:17), dragon emblems (00:14:43-00:14:50), brewing of “Kuchikamisake” (mouth-chewed sake) (00:15:20-00:16:10), and offerings to Iwakura, weave together the themes of “Musubi” (knotting) comets, and water, perpetuating a tradition that has been handed down through generations. The depiction of a comet inside the Iwakura, which represents the “body” of Miyamizu Shrine's deity (01:00:53-01:01:05), serves as a symbolic reminder of the comet's fall 1,200 years ago, further intertwining the shrine's history with the celestial event.

Characters associated with Mitsuha, such as Katsuhiko Teshigahara (勅使河原克彦, nicknamed Tessie) and Natori Sayaka (名取早耶香, nicknamed Sayachin, who is destined to marry Teshigahara), play crucial roles in warning the residents of Itomori town about the impending comet. Their surnames signify their roles as divine messengers, in line with the town's folklore. The Miyamizu family, deeply connected to the shrine and water, is represented by these characters. “Teshi” (勅使) translates to a person who conveys divine will, while “Kawara” (河原) refers to a riverbed, underscoring their symbolic connection to the shrine near the riverbanks and their roles in the narrative.

In Tokyo, Taki's surname Tachibana (立花) references the “fruit of the incense tree of the season” from the *Kojiki*, symbolizing eternal existence beyond time. The composition of his first name, Taki (瀧), combining “Sansui” (瀧, meaning water) with “Ryu” (龍, meaning dragon) in Kanji, suggests a mythical water dragon transcending time, mirroring Mitsuha's connection to the Dragon god.

Supporting characters, such as Taki's part-time job co-worker Miki Okudera (奥寺ミキ) and Tsukasa Fujii (藤井司), fulfill crucial roles in supporting Taki. Okudera's name, implying the inner sanctuary (奥, oku) of a temple (寺, dera), represents a sacred space providing divine support. Similarly, “Tsukasa” (司), translating to an official, denotes a behind-the-scenes support role, further highlighting the network of support surrounding Taki.

The scene where Taki seeks refuge (“Komoru”) in a cave and eats “Omusubi” (rice ball) during a rainstorm is symbolic of the moment he receives the divine power necessary for transformation or rebirth, ultimately leading to “Musubi” (knotting) (as discussed in section 4.1.2). On the night before Taki's seclusion in the cave, Okudera and Tsukasa are seen conversing in front of a poster of Hida, with Okudera smoking a cigarette and exhaling smoke (Fig. 7). This act is metaphorically interpreted as creating clouds through smoke, which in turn induces rain. This symbolizes “Sympathetic magic,” as defined by J. G. Frazer, where her actions are seen as a ritual to summon rain for Taki's period of “Komoru” (to seclude oneself) in the cave. Through this symbolic act, Okudera and Tsukasa provide behind-the-scenes support, contributing to Taki's acquisition of the “Musubi” (knotting) power.

Fig. 7: Miki Okudera smoking a cigarette with a poster of Hida in the background.
(It plays a magical role in bringing rain to Hida.)



(Your Name. 00:53:33)

This integration of character names, ancestral lineage, and ritual actions seamlessly intertwines to establish a profound sense of “Musubi” (knotting) within the narrative, highlighting the deeply embedded thematic elements that permeate the film. This concept of “Musubi” (knotting) is not only a thread connecting the characters and their destinies but also a binding force that weaves together the film's rich tapestry of love, fate, and time. Through the meticulous portrayal of ancestral rituals and the symbolic meanings of the characters' names, the film underscores the significance of connections that transcend time and space, embodying the essence of “Musubi” (knotting) as a core theme that resonates throughout the story.

4.2.2 Ritual Structure for Establishing “Musubi” (knotting)

The foundation for establishing the concept of “Musubi” (knotting) is intricately woven into the narrative structure of *Your Name*. This thematic knotting serves as an act of forging new states by connecting disparate elements, resulting in the creation of something profoundly transformative. Across various societies, the act of knotting is recognized as a ritual structure, characterized by distinct phases and common features. Genep (1960) and Turner (1969) categorize these phases as rites of passage, encapsulating three fundamental stages: Separation, Liminality and Reintegration (Genep, 1960; Turner, 1969).

In the context of the film's narrative structure:

<Separation Rites>

Mitsuha and Taki share experiences through body-switch that bring them closer together, only to be unexpectedly separated by a tragic event - the impending collision of a comet with Mitsuha's town. This separation initiates a period of liminality for the characters, who exist in a state of “Kataware” (half-light) where they are neither fully connected nor separated.

<Transition Rites>

In order to ensure their mutual “Musubi” (knotting), Taki, embodying Mitsuha's “Kataware” (half-light), undertakes a ritual process to save the people of Itomori town, including Mitsuha. He ventures back in time and switches with Mitsuha through the mystical power of Mitsuha's “Kuchikamisake” (mouth-chewed sake). By informing Mitsuha of the impending disaster, they achieve the “Sukui” (salvation) of Itomori town's people. After this “Sukui” (salvation), however, their shared memories fade.

<Reintegration Rites>

Subconsciously drawn to each other, Mitsuha and Taki meet by chance on the steps of a Tokyo street, signifying the phase of integration. At that moment, Taki calls out to Mitsuha, leading to their “Musubi” (knotting)

The narrative structure of *Your Name* cleverly echoes the stages of significant rites of passage observed in various cultures. Each stage has a poignant meaning: The “Separation Rites” mark the divergence of the protagonists, initiating a period of transition in which they exist in an ambiguous state of in-between. The “Transition Rites” depict Taki's quest to reconnect with Mitsuha, symbolizing a ritualistic attempt to mend their severed ties, albeit at the cost of their shared memories. Finally, the “Reintegration Rites” culminate in their unexpected reunion, transcending temporal boundaries and underscoring the depth of their bond.

Through this alignment of ritual phases, the film reflects emotional, spiritual, and existential transformations akin to religious rites, delving into the depths of human connection, destiny, and the mysterious passage of time. Each stage - Separation, Transition, and Reintegration - mirrors significant rites of passage, enhancing the narrative's resonance with universal experiences and rituals observed across cultures.

4.3 Manifestation of “Musubi” (knotting) through “Kotodama” (言靈, word spirit) and Mythology

Your Name intricately weaves the concepts of “Kotodama” (言靈, word spirit, refers to the spiritual power contained in words. It was believed that kotodama had the power to bring about a state according to the words and their contents that were spoken) and ancient mythological motifs to manifest the profound notion of “Musubi” (knotting) within its narrative fabric. Deeply rooted in Japanese culture, “Kotodama” (word spirit) embraces the belief in the spiritual power of words, emphasizing their ability to shape reality.

Fig. 8: Mitsuha activates her “Kotodama” (word spirit) under the torii gate (shrine gate).
(torii gate is the boundary between the secular and sacred realms.)



(*Your Name*. 00:16:57)

The film vividly illustrates this concept at a pivotal moment in Mitsuha's “Separation Rites”. Under the torii gate (shrine gate), a symbol steeped in the liminality of this world, another world, she fervently utters a plea: “I hate this town! I hate this life! Please make me a handsome Tokyo boy in my next life! (00:16:56-00:17:05) (Fig. 8).” Remarkably, her impassioned words materialize when she awakens in Taki's body in Tokyo, exemplifying the transformative potential of “Kotodama” (word spirit).

Beyond the “Separation Rites”, the narrative evolves into the phase of “Transition Rites” (“Kataware” (half-light)) and moves toward the integration of “Musubi” (knotting) as “Reintegration Rites”. Integration occurs when both characters utter the phrase “Your name is...” during their final encounter. This phrase symbolizes the binding of their destinies, echoing ancient Japanese beliefs as seen in the first poem of the *Manyōshū* (万葉集, the oldest existing anthology of Japanese poetry), where hearing someone's name signifies a soul-binding moment similar to an ancient ritual of courtship song (Ikeda 1957: 32). This profound moment resonates with historical contexts and lends depth to the central question, “Your name is...” posed at the end of the story.

In addition, *Your Name* weaves together motifs from Japan's oldest mythological text, the *Kojiki*. This ancient tale offers rich parallels to the themes of the film. For example, the *Kojiki* recounts the union between Izanagi (伊邪那岐, God of Man, father of Amaterasu and Susano) and Izanami (伊邪那美, wife of Izanagi), the divine couple, who seek integration through a sacred ritual. Izanagi walked clockwise around the pillar, and Izanami walked counterclockwise around the pillar, and when they met, they performed a child-bearing ritual.

However, the order of the ritual was disrupted when Izanami called to Izanagi first, and they couldn't give birth to a good child.

Fig. 9: Fig. 10: A scene where Taki walks from the left and Mitsuha walks from the right on the footbridge, passing each other.

(Footbridges symbolize boundaries. Taki and Mitsuha pass silently, foreshadowing their mythical reunion.)



(Your Name. 01:37:13)



(Your Name. 01:37:37)

Similarly, the first meeting between Mitsuha and Taki in *Your Name* resonates with the *Kojiki* narrative. Mitsuha's premature first conversation with Taki on the train before the fall of the comet in 2013 disrupts the expected order, symbolizing a failed connection between the characters. However, when they meet for the second time after the “Sukui” (salvation) in 2016, the order changes to conform to the correct ritualistic sequence. In other words, in the final scene, they passed each other once on the stairs, but Taki turned around and called out to Mitsuha first. This shift marks the second instance in which their fates are intertwined, echoing the successful union of Izanagi and Izanami in the *Kojiki*.

Furthermore, the “Reintegration Rites” in the film meticulously embed visual clues that correspond to the circular movement depicted in the *Kojiki*.

Although they did not yet know each other, they passed each other on a footbridge one winter day while searching for something. At that moment, Taki walked from right to left, and Mitsuha walked from left to right (Fig. 9). This movement is reversed from the structure in which Izanagi turns clockwise and Izanami turns counterclockwise (Fig. 10), indicating their initial misalignment.

The last scene where Taki calls to her takes place on the stairs. Here, Taki moves from left to right and Mitsuha moves from right to left, mirroring the ritual procedure described in the *Kojiki*. And then Taki called out to Mitsuha first, so the ritual was established in the same way as Izanagi and Izanami in the *Kojiki*.

This circular movement and the characters' actions are signifying the cyclical and harmonious nature of their divine connection and elements collectively underscore the nuanced manifestation of “Musubi” (knotting) through the amalgamation of “Kotodama” (word spirit) and mythological motifs within the film's narrative tapestry.

5. Conclusion

The objective of this paper was to comprehensively understand the central themes of “Musubi” (knotting) and “Sukui” (salvation) deeply rooted in the highly acclaimed animated *Your Name*, utilizing insights from folkloristics from the perspective of Japanese folklore and folk religion. The analysis penetrated the film's rich narrative tapestry, unraveling the implicit religious worldview intricately woven into the story.

What became clear is that “Musubi” (knotting) appears in the film as a compelling force, orchestrating harmonious connections between individuals and their environment, transcending physicality. The mechanism of “Musubi” (knotting) that realizes “Sukui” (salvation) was skillfully established by fusing elements such as connections between characters that transcend time and space, non-linear concepts of time, fusion of rituals and daily life, the power of words (“Kotodama”), mythological motifs, and the structure of rites of passage. Notably, it became evident that the literary traditions and cosmology of ancient Japan, as seen in the *Kojiki* and *Manyoshu*, were reinterpreted in a modern context, forming the film's multilayered meaning structure and providing a framework for addressing contemporary crises.

In this way, *Your Name* ingeniously incorporates a complex network of “Musubi” (knotting) aimed at “Sukui” (salvation). This provides a new perspective that goes beyond the conventional binary interpretations of the work - namely, the one-sided view that salvation is achieved by men living in big cities, and those being saved are women living in rural areas, implicitly representing the superiority of urban areas and men. Rather, “Sukui” (salvation) is based on a network founded on overall harmony and cooperation, transcending the superiority of individual elements within the work.

Particularly in the context of the 3.11 disaster and other human crises, simplifying this work as a realization of salvation through the superiority of urban areas or men would mean missing the deeper message to humanity conveyed by the work. By expanding the analytical framework to folkloristic and spiritual perspectives, going beyond criticisms of gender and urban centrism, a richer and broader possibility of interpretation of the work emerges.

In conclusion, *Your Name* transcends being merely an entertainment piece and becomes an important cultural text that reflects traditional knowledge of “Sukui” (salvation) for human crises in the modern context. It demonstrates how traditional Japanese concepts can respond to contemporary societal issues, opening a new path to explore the dialogue between contemporary popular culture and traditional Japanese wisdom.

It is evident that Japanese studies and Japanese cultural research need to be conducted with a global perspective in the future. While this paper interpreted *Your Name* as a reinterpretation of traditional Japanese knowledge utilizing insights from folkloristics, further anthropological approaches could deepen our understanding of the work from the viewpoint of human culture. This will lead to a more comprehensive understanding of the film and provide new perspectives on how traditional wisdom can address contemporary global challenges.

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