From the City to the Mountain and Back Again: Situating Contemporary Shugendô in Japanese Social and Religious Life

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A Thesis

In

The Department of

Religion

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at

Concordia University

Montréal, Québec, Canada

April 2013

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

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Entitled: **From the City to the Mountain and Back Again: Situating Contemporary Shugendô in Japanese Social and Religious Life**

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (Religion)

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ABSTRACT

From the City to the Mountain and Back Again: Situating Contemporary Shugendô in Japanese Social and Religious Life

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Concordia University, 2013

This thesis examines mountain ascetic training practices in Japan known as Shugendô (*The Way to Acquire Power*) from the 1980s to the present. Focus is given to the dynamic interplay between two complementary movements: 1) the creative process whereby charismatic, media-savvy priests in the Kii Peninsula (south of Kyoto) have re-invented traditional practices and training spaces to attract and satisfy the needs of diverse urban lay practitioners, and 2) the myriad ways diverse urban ascetic householders integrate lessons learned from mountain austerities in their daily lives in Tokyo and Osaka. This thesis argues that the creation of condensed mountain entry rituals such as the overnight Lotus Ascent of Mount Ômine, a successful campaign to designate sacred training grounds in the Kii Peninsulaa UNESCO World Heritage cultural landscape and creation of an "eco-pilgrimage" in Kumano are best understood as creative strategies by Shugendô priests to maintain financial solvency, relevancy and market share while providing direct access to the transcendent in a competitive and uncertain time.

Though Shugendô priests and UNESCO designation served as gateways into this research, the experiences of urban lay ascetics are emphasized throughout. Two questions animate the thesis: Why does rebirth during a grueling, twenty-six kilometer overnight mountain ascent imagined as ritual death and re-entry into the Tantric Womb become necessary? How might urban ascetics' initial motivations and subsequent integration of mountain learning resonate with broader concerns about employment, environment, family, health and well-being,

rising suicide rate, memory and commemoration during the recessionary and zero-growth period known as Japan's "Lost Decade(s)" (1990s - present)?

Reflections upon the attempt to represent this place and these practices in an accessible documentary film will be one element of a self-reflexive, collaborative and participatory research methodology informed by participant-observer fieldwork, interviews, focus groups and historiographical examination of the relevant primary, secondary and theoretical works.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project could not have been achieved without the patience, generosity, good will and enthusiasm of many Shugendô priests and lay participants in Yoshino, Shingu, Osaka and Tokyo. I am grateful to Tanaka Riten, Tateishi Kôshô, Tateishi Rika, Gojô Ryoki, Gojô Kakugyô, Iwagishi Shinsei, Yamamoto Noboru, Harasawa Kenta, Ishihara Jun, Ozaki Hitoshi, Fujie Noritoshi, Miyamoto Yasuhiko, Okada Taikô and countless other individuals who provided practical assistance and innumerable insights. Tateishi Kôshô hosted me and filmmaking partner Jean-Marc Abela at his training temple Sangakurin for six weeks to observe, participate in and film daily activities. Two unnamed staff members at the Ministry of Culture (Tokyo) and UNESCO (New York) candidly discussed their research into cultural property, national treasures and UNESCO World Heritage. In Ibaraki the Fujita, Kawanishi and Okazaki families welcomed me into their homes and have taken me under their wings over nearly two decades of life, work and research in Japan. I can never repay them for their kindness and all they have taught me.

A chance encounter with Miyake Hitoshi at Haguro-san and the gift of his signed name card propelled me toward Kinpusenji for the annual Frog Hop festival in 2002. Though I ultimately did not pursue all leads that he and his voluminous scholarship provided, I am grateful for this serendipitous encounter and the good will and affection bestowed upon me by Tanaka Riten and Kinpusenji staff when I arrived unannounced with Miyake-sensei's introduction.

In Montréal, my thesis committee members Marc des Jardins, Norma Joseph and Matthew Penney guided me through all stages of doctoral study: exams, thesis research, writing and defense. With their encouragement, I waded into several new and productive fields I would never have thought to pursue. Marc, Norma and Matthew listened patiently to initial, clumsy efforts to engage these new materials and perspectives, read several rough drafts of the proposal and thesis and provided extensive comments, questions and constructive criticism throughout. Matthew's encyclopedic knowledge of and sharp insights about contemporary Japanese history together with his ability to situate the relevant issues in both very local and global contexts was always illuminating. Sharon Carey at the Graduate School provided expert technical assistance and flexibility, helping make possible a June graduation, not to mention a restful and stress-free summer. Shaman Hatley and Lorenzo di Thommaso supported the thesis and enabled a streamlined process to completion. Satoshi Ikeda provided refreshing candor and chastised me in all the right ways, imparting confidence that reflecting upon and revealing the nature of interactions with research participants is a legitimate and needed component of a participatory research methodology. Barbara Ambros' rigor, clarity and constant curiosity and innovation in archival and field research methods have been inspiring. I am grateful for the great care and attention she gave to reading the manuscript, offering her considerable knowledge and challenging me to bring it to a level of precision and clarity I could not have achieved otherwise.

Friends and colleagues Deb Lunny, Kory Goldberg, François Thibeault, Mario Bellemare, Paul di Stefano, Bobby Ramsay, Scott Lenhart, Dan McKee, Ted Burger, Avery Larose, Sylvain Duguay, Tom Young, Alberto Sanchez, Mohamed Mehdi, Kateri Décary, Julien Novales-Flamarique, Sarwat Viqar, Sujata Ghosh, David Austin, Courtney Lester, Steven Roy, Jonathan Lalancette, Marie-Laurence Dolbec-Hebert, Stefan Verna and Adam Thompson encouraged me, offered helpful advice, helped me think through difficult problems and generally provided outstanding company. Jean-Marc Abela took a chance on a risky film project in a culture and language he knew nothing about, devoted thousands of hours to film, edit, mix and discuss the film with me, and consistently demonstrated a great deal of creativity, sensitivity and

patience. Several of Abela's photographs appear in the thesis with his kind permission. Imaizumi Eiko and Alena Eckelmann provided eyewitness reports, personal photographs and critical feedback on early drafts of chapters. I am grateful to editors Pamela Winfield and Charles Henderson for the invitation to present an earlier version of Chapter Three in a special issue of *Cross Currents* on contemporary Asian religions. Publisher Wiley-Blackwell granted permission to republish passages from the article.

Maris Boyd-Gillette, Hank Glassman, Levi McLaughlin, Tullio Lobetti, Timothy Lehmann and Jonathan Thumas read and offered critical feedback and helpful suggestions on various chapters. John Deters devoted many hours to speaking and writing about his engagements with and curiosity about Shugendô. Carina and Sandra Roth, two outstanding scholars and filmmakers, reached out to Abela and me and have been exceptionally generous with their insights, materials and ideas. Gaynor Sekimori answered many questions and provided research materials and encouragement. Her invitation to participate in a Shugendô film festival and symposium at SOAS, University London, to honor the memory of her teacher Professor Carmen Blacker stimulated many ideas and questions. The experience enabled discussions with Kitamura Minao, Lucia Dolce, Tullio Lobelli, Sandra and Carina Roth. Paul Swanson shared his knowledge and provided rare video recordings from early fieldwork. David W. Plath has been a regular conversation partner and mentor in all matters related to ethnographic storytelling and filmmaking. Above all, I am grateful for his friendship, encouragement and wisdom.

Cornell University's East Asia program funded initial research fieldwork (2002 and 2003). John Abbott College's Faculty Professional Development Committee provided a travel grant and supported follow-up research and filmmaking (2007). The Buddhist Film Foundation served as a fiscal sponsor and the US-Japan Foundation funded post-production of the documentary film *Shugendô Now* based on this research (2009). Gaetano Kazuo Maida (BFF), David Janes (USJF), Alice Apley (Documentary Educational Resources) and Joanne Bobier have been champions of the documentary and have helped us expand its reach and impact. Distribution opened up new avenues of research and put us directly in touch with several of the individuals whose stories appear in the thesis.

In Ithaca, Kyoko Iriye Selden taught me more about Japanese language, culture and life than I could write about in a dozen theses. Her mark is on every page, as is that of her life companion Mark Selden. Together, Kyoko and Mark represent the very best of engaged scholarship and unfailing support of the rule of law, human rights and social justice.

I thank my parents Kathleen and Russell McGuire, Sr., and my brother Russ McGuire, Jr., and sister-in-law Patty Gonzalez-McGuire for all their support and encouragement over many years no matter how arcane my research may have seemed or distant my graduation date. Ari Rosner and Omri Ayalon, my sister and brother-in-law, have shown consistent interest in and enthusiasm about this research as well as our family's well-being, as have Aram and Michal Ayalon, my father and mother-in-law.

Finally, I want to thank Rotem Ayalon, my partner and source of constant nourishment and inspiration. Rotem and our children Dahlia and Matan merit the highest appreciation for their patience and understanding during some difficult circumstances as I worked day and night shifts to complete the thesis. I am glad for all the occasions they barged in, brought me a cup of tea, crawled into my arms or kissed me goodnight as I worked. I know I can never return all of the time stolen away from you, but am happy to be more present once more in your lives.

For Rotem, Dahlia and Matan

and

In loving memory of Kyoko Iriye Selden (1936-2013)

If I walked a difficult trail or walked for many hours, and I made it, then I feel like I can do anything. What is preventing me are just my own excuses. In nature excuses are useless. You are there and you either make it or you don't. Nature doesn't listen to your explanation for why you couldn't climb that mountain or sympathize with your self-pity of not feeling well today. Nature teaches how to be strong and how to find this strength inside oneself and in the environment.

Alena Eckelmann

Every year for the last thirty I have heard the head abbott discuss how arduous shugyô is, that we should subject ourselves to the harshest of training. But for me, I find it all so enjoyable. You ought to see me the night before departure. I'm like a kindergartner on the night before a field trip: can't sleep…too nervous to eat anything…endlessly packing, repacking my bags…excited about returning to the mountain to see old friends.

Ishihara Jun

At first I thought mountain austerities and city life were absolutely separate things like "On" and "Off." More recently I realized such thinking is misguided. In fact the two must be considered one. The pleasure I feel in the mountains, I must feel in the city. And the tension I feel in the city, I must feel in the mountains. I shouldn't treat these experiences as two separate things. Shouldn't I consider them as one?

Ozaki Hitoshi

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NOTE ON CONVENTIONS AND STYLE

Japanese and Chinese names follow the East Asian practice of presenting family name first, with the exception of individuals who publish extensively in English. Where Japanese or other foreign vocabulary items are presented, their first appearance is in italics with a gloss in English. Relevant Chinese ideogram(s), Romanized pronunciation and Sanskrit original follow in parentheses or footnotes, depending on context. The modified Hepburn system for Romanization of Japanese terms is used; Pinyin for Chinese terms. Romanization in Wade Giles format may also be given for proper names and titles in common use.

All photographs and translations, unless indicated, are the author's. All financial figures are presented in Japanese Yen with US Dollar (USD) equivalents in parentheses. Pseudonyms are used for a minority of individuals presented based upon preference given on informed consent, but indication of the use of pseudonyms for particular individuals is omitted to avoid drawing unnecessary attention to individuals' wish for confidentiality. In the case of public figures from prominent institutions such as UNESCO and the Japanese Ministry of Culture, however, the individual's request for anonymity is noted.

In passages describing participant-observer fieldwork and filmmaking encounters with co-participants, the first-person singular is combined with a highly personal and self-reflexive style of writing to offer a holistic and humanistic portrait of lay practitioners' experiences of Shugendô ascetic training. The intent is also to make visible and vivid the highly collaborative nature of this project and the extent to which subjectivity, serendipity and embodied engagement with the ritual ascetic practices of Shugendô greatly facilitated discovery, insight and ethnographic storytelling.

INTRODUCTION

I. Repent and purify

We arise at two AM in darkness. Forbidden to wash, shave or brush our teeth, 120 lay participants from diverse backgrounds don white ascetics' robes, inhale our breakfast (miso soup, white rice and a few pickles), and do as we are told. Two rice balls, a small thermos of water, and a few pickled plums are provided for sustenance during the twenty-six kilometer, sixteen hour Lotus Ascent of Mount Ômine (大峰山 elevation 1,600 meters) in Yoshino, Nara Prefecture (south of Kyoto). A kindly veteran purchases a sports drink from a nearby vending machine and slips it into my backpack without comment. As we leave the village and enter the mountain, priest-guides prompt first-time participants to repeat, "Repent, Repent. Purify the Six Roots of Perception" (懺悔懺悔六根清浄 *Sange sange, rokkon shôjô*). The potent syllables reverberate from the rear to the front of our double-rowed procession, echoing off into the distance, seeming finally to trail off into the mist that cloaks the surrounding peaks.

At regular intervals we make offerings of lotus flowers, rice, tea and sutra recitation to various deities enshrined along the path. Priestly authority spot-lit by a camera crew from the national broadcasting company (NHK) has a certain way of maintaining reverence. But truth be told, we first-time participants are a slovenly bunch. Already soaked with sweat, our water reserves depleted and breathing laborious, the first crop of blisters on our feet begins to throb. To make matters worse, quite a few of us are caked with mud having slipped and fallen during the first few kilometers. Meanwhile, our more seasoned counterparts and priest-guides march confidently up increasingly steeper slopes in pristine white robes while belting out the appropriate sutra at will. Few of us first-timers manage to find the right page in the sutra book, let alone keep the rhythm. Forget about absorbing very many, if any, details about the historical

and religious significance of each prayer site. It is all we can do to keep from tumbling over the path's edge into the ravine. Though I have not yet generated sufficient spiritual power to read the minds of my ascetic colleagues, I suspect I am not the only one considering how I might slip away in the darkness back down the mountain.

Priests' guidance from the evening orientation meeting plays softly on a continuous loop in my mind: "Do you think we do this because we enjoy being in the mountains with the bugs, sweat, filth and pain? If you're here for trekking, you've come to the wrong place. For us, these peaks are the residence of the kami and buddhas." Somehow, the climb gradually becomes more manageable. Chanting "Sange, Sange" imparts a renewed sense of purpose, bodily warmth and the energizing sensation of full volume chanting in a large group with excellent acoustics and stunning natural scenery. The variety and majesty of the ferns alone is astounding. We arrive at the first peak just in time to chant the Heart Sutra as the sun catches fire. The background noise of self-doubts and hollow excuses gradually subsides when the ascent's *mise-en- scène* turns sublime. The bruised soles of my feet and grumpiness about power lines gives way to a sense of appreciation for the beauty of the landscape and skill with which this feast for the senses has been choreographed.

Focus shifts to each footfall and hand placement. Trudging through mud leavened with pine needles and fallen leaves wearing the thinnest of rubber-soled, split-toed canvas slippers (地下足袋 *chikatabi*) proves pleasurable. Certainly more so than negotiating granite outcroppings made slippery by moss and a constant sideways falling rain. I realize each terrain imparts a new sensory awareness in every cell of my body. This sensitivity is made possible, priests suggest, by purifying the Six Roots of Perception. The more prosaic minded might argue this awareness comes from forsaking thick-soled mountain boots. Nevertheless, these potent syllables of

"Sange, Sange" and our collective breath propel us up the steep slope, freeing up energy to contemplate our reasons for coming to the mountain.

II. Definitions, key questions and concerns

A. Shugendô as an emergent social movement during the "Lost Decade(s)"

Shugendô (修験道 *The Way to Acquire Power*) is a syncretistic, mountain ascetic tradition whose leadership and rank and file membership have borrowed selectively from Tantric Buddhist, Daoist and "Shintô" sources over many centuries. None of these borrowings, however, is "final or authoritative"—when cosmology does not fit natural mountain formations, writes Paul Swanson, "so much the worse for cosmology" (1981:79). Some overlap can be readily seen between the form and motivations for certain practices in Shugendô and Japanese Tantric Buddhist schools. These include the practices of "Becoming a buddha in this very body" (即身成仏 *sokushin jôbutsu*) and navigation through a sacralized landscape upon which the Dual Realm Mandala (両界曼荼羅 *ryôkai mandara*) has been ritually superimposed. Nevertheless, Shugendô is best regarded as an independent tradition.

Throughout its history, stakeholders have, for pragmatic reasons (survival during the Meiji dissociation of "Shintô" and Buddhist divinities is only one example), presented Shugendô and its cosmology and soteriology as having far greater overlap with more powerful religious and political institutions than ever likely existed in actual practice in the mountains (Ambros 2008:239; Sekimori 2005:199-200; Blacker 1965:96). D. Max Moerman and Gaynor Sekimori have characterized this creative strategy as an inevitable process of "sectarian doctrinalization" by which Shugendô caretakers sought to justify their traditions' validity and legitimacy in the

post-Meiji and post-war contexts by cloaking them in rituals, symbols and cosmology of Japanese Tantric Buddhism (Sekimori and Moerman 2009:1).

This thesis is neither a study of Shugendô ecclesiastical and intellectual history nor an examination of the dynamic interaction between its various and competing sources of influence.[1] I focus instead upon the contemporary meanings being worked out in the mountains and back home in cities by a diverse community of urban lay practitioners. Special emphasis is placed upon the period of the 1980s to the first decade of the twenty-first century—Japan's so-called "Lost Decade(s)" following the burst of its bubble economy and implementation of neoliberal market reforms. Widespread outsourcing, deregulation and the legalization and normalization of non-permanent, part-time contract work are often cited in connection with these post-bubble policy changes.

For the purposes of this thesis I define contemporary Shugendô as a mountain ascetic vehicle for self-cultivation and healing that privileges an embodied experience of core teachings, including the occasional shock technique. Suspending neophytes headfirst over an 800 meter deep ravine as a rite of repentance and rebirth (西の覗き *Nishi no nozoki* "Gazing West [to Amida's Pure Land]") is one case in point.[2] I argue that participation in condensed and creatively reinvented ritual training practices provides contemporary urban lay practitioners with an attractive alternative to and a set of coping strategies for dealing with precarious life circumstances aboard the treadmill of post-bubble, zero-growth Japan. Further, the growth of participation in Shugendô practices in the contemporary period can be regarded as a kind of emergent social movement whereby disaffected urban lay practitioners seek to recalibrate life-

[1] Sekimori's survey of the field provides unparalleled guidance for individuals seeking historiographical context on these matters (2009).

[2] Discussed on pp. 32-33.

work balance, transform chaotic relationships and reconnect with the natural world by means of the culturally recognized activity of walking in forested mountains. I query to what extent the challenges of survival in modern Japan, including overcoming poverty, episodic or permanent joblessness, anxiety, depression, infertility, social isolation, rootlessness, homelessness, domestic violence, substance abuse and suicide ideation triggers participation in Shugendô by a certain cohort of urban lay practitioners.

I do not argue that all or even a majority of lay practitioners are disaffected wage slaves or would-be revolutionaries. Some participants come with simple curiosity about cultural traditions they may have read about in a book or because they enjoy the practice and company. Others ascend the mountain out of a conviction that Shugendô training helps them cultivate discipline for corporate success or managing interpersonal conflicts. Nevertheless, the socioeconomic and existential backdrop of the Lost Decade(s) is a helpful optic for understanding what triggers a certain cohort of urban lay practitioners to pursue Shugendô. How these resilient individuals integrate mountain ascetic training experiences in daily life in dense urban communities is an abiding concern throughout the thesis. By this I take Shugendô practice to be a form of engagement with, not a retreat from, contemporary social and political life.

B. Focus upon urban practitioners engaged in mundane occupations

Participants in Shugendô mountain training rituals in the 1960s and 1970s when the first wave of Japanese and Western researchers did participant-observer fieldwork are reputed to have imbibed a store of magico-religious power for use in ecstatic occupations (divination, spiritual counseling, séances, and so on). In contrast to these "otherworldly benefits," contemporary lay participants from primarily urban backgrounds in the early twenty-first century have no less

valid but certainly more "this-worldly" benefits (現世利益 *genze riyaku*) in sight.[3] During fieldwork I met book publishers, greenskeepers, semi-retired electricians, schoolteachers, television producers, pastry chefs, nightclub owners, part-time UNESCO employees, company presidents, day laborers, students, factory workers and the unemployed. There were some ordained priests from Shugendô or other sects and other kinds of religious professionals, but they were the exception.

I focus upon lay practitioners from urban backgrounds because their experiences and perspectives have not yet been sufficiently studied. Priestly views and experiences dominate the small but growing body of literature on Shugendô. I became immediately curious to know why urban lay practitioners would displace themselves at great effort and expense to rural mountain training sites to participate in demanding ascetic practices in an obscure tradition. Why voluntarily subject yourself to such physical hardship, constant scolding from priests and the deliberate risk of debilitating injury for a shot at rebirth? Why does rebirth become necessary in post-bubble Japan? What resources does a rural, mountain ascetic tradition offer harried, urban dwellers in the face of contemporary social, economic and ecological crises?

III. Methodology

A. Selection of field sites and participants

Major fieldwork research (participant-observer) for this thesis was carried out in Japan during the summers of 2002, 2003 and 2007. I then supplemented knowledge gained from fieldwork by study of the relevant primary and secondary source literatures and theoretical works in the relative quiet of the library. During fieldwork I visited approximately seventy-five sites

[3] Reader and Tanabe argue that concerns for "this-worldly benefits" have dominated Japanese post-war religious life (1998).

including temples, mountains, rivers, waterfalls, caves, lotus ponds, rice paddies, gardens, private homes, beekeeping cooperatives, extermination and concrete company offices, social housing complexes, karaoke boxes, nightclubs, urban parks, French pastry shops, rooftop gardens, mountaintop psychedelic trance parties, coffee shops and an eight-year old's piano recital.

My primary areas of research have been in rural communities in the Kii Peninsula (mainly Shingu and Nachi in Wakayama prefecture and Yoshino in Nara prefecture) and the metropolises of Osaka and Tokyo. I did preliminary fieldwork at Kinpusenji temple in Yoshino and several branch temples (末寺 *matsuji*) in Hokkaidô, Tokyo and Okinawa. I also visited Shugendô training sites affiliated with different temples and traditions in Yamagata (Mount Haguro), Nikkô (Mount Nantai) and the Kunisaki peninsula. Although I do not mention them explicitly, what I observed and learned at these other sites informs my thinking about contemporary Shugendô.

I decided to focus on communities of practitioners I met in Yoshino and Shingu because I found them to be the most dynamic, innovative and hospitable. That a campaign was underway to have Shugendô training grounds in the Kii Peninsula designated a UNESCO World Heritage cultural landscape also caught my interest early on. I anticipated the impacts of mass tourism on these places and practices would be significant and wanted to hear how various stakeholders in the community thought and felt about this process of becoming a globally recognized brand.

At my main field sites, temples Kinpusenji 金峯山寺 and Tonai-In 東南院 (Yoshino) and Sangakurin 山学林 (Shingu), I immersed myself in whatever activities were taking place. In Yoshino I ascended Mount Ômine during three occasions of the annual Lotus Ascent accompanied by approximately 120 male lay practitioners and 30 ordained male priests, temple

staff and their affiliates (2002, 2003, 2007). I also joined a group of 40 parents and their children, temple staff and lay volunteers during the Three Day Monk Camp (三日坊主 *mikka bôzu*) at Tonai-In in 2007. Individuals I met during these events invited me to travel to Osaka and Tokyo to observe first-hand how they integrated lessons learned from the mountains in their daily lives.

At Sangakurin in Shingu I lived at the temple, participated in mixed gender morning and evening ritual services, and accompanied priest Tateishi Kôshô to perform bee appeasement rituals in Nachi and prayer services in suburban Shingu in 2003 and 2007. The highlight of this experience was joining Tateishi and a dozen co-participants for a Slide to Rebirth down a seven-meter cascade within a circuit of 47 waterfalls (Keyaki ga hara, near the Nakahechi trail in Wakayama).[4]

When possible I conducted informal and formal interviews and focus group sessions with approximately 100 individuals. I also made photographs and gathered sound and video recordings. The most sustained attempt to represent fieldwork in audio and visual media occurred in 2007-2009 when I co-produced a feature documentary film (*Shugendô Now*) with Montreal independent filmmaker Jean-Marc Abela.

Being present for sustained periods at these temples brought opportunities to partake in a wealth of daily activities such as sitting meditation, fire rituals, mountain ascetic training, gardening and food preparation, shopping, cleaning, receiving guests and sharing meals. The fact of being nearly seven feet tall, capable of communicating in Japanese and eager to learn about and do Shugendô meant that most members of these communities were curious to speak with me about their experiences. I have known several of these individuals for more than a decade now. In the thesis I present portraits of fifteen lay practitioners and four priests for whom I can offer

[4] Discussed on pp. 62-70.

the most complete representation. I have tried to offer some balance in participants' gender, age, geographic, socioeconomic and cultural background. Certain individuals were chosen because they represent certain demographics within contemporary Shugendô communities or historical moments within Japanese social and religious life. At the same time, each individual brings unique perspectives and experiences. Osaka-based concrete company president Miyamoto Yasuhiko is introduced in Chapter Two, for example, because his Korean ancestry locates him within a particular community formed by families displaced by the colonial annexation of Korea in 1910. Miyamoto is also a compelling individual whose professional and volunteer activities have been forged by his participation in mountain training practices in two of my field sites.

Research on the impacts of UNESCO World Heritage Designation on Shugendô training sites and practices described in Chapter Three took place both within the designated sites themselves (Nachi, Kôyasan, Shingu and Yoshino in the Kii Peninsula), but also at the Ministry of Cultural Affairs in Tokyo and in New York with a UNESCO employee who evaluated the research dossier for the Kii Peninsula in 2004. Details about the 2011 post-typhoon conditions of the Kumano pilgrimage route and inequities in reconstruction efforts within World Heritage sites were gleaned from a pair of extended Skype interviews with Shingu residents Tateishi Kôshô, a Shugendô priest, and Alena Eckelmann, a freelance journalist and lay practitioner who relocated there shortly after the triple disaster of 11 March 2011. Eckelmann provided her personal photographs.

Travel to Honolulu and San Francisco in 2010 and 2011 to participate in film festivals and academic conferences afforded time to conduct formal and informal interviews and walk the mountains among a handful of Western Shugendô practitioners. Several of the individuals have subsequently participated in mountain training activities at field sites in Japan and in the company of priests and lay practitioners introduced in the thesis. Their perspectives and

experiences suggest the ways this "indigenous" tradition deeply tied to Japanese mountains may have "gone viral" in recent decades.

B. Camera greatly facilitated access and discoveries

Traveling to Japan in 2007 with a camera and a professional filmmaker along with the shared determination to document the practices in an accessible film *greatly* facilitated access, enhanced learning and multiplied discoveries and experiences in ways I never anticipated. This experience was the most productive and important stage of my research to date. Though some readers may regard the documentary as a complementary project, I consider this collaborative process as a central component of my research *methodology*.

Abela and I interacted most frequently in the company of two or more individuals in a kind of focus group setting where members could form their views in conversation with others. We asked every participant at least two questions: 1) "What do the practices mean to you?" and, 2) "How do you integrate them in your daily life in the city?" In some cases Abela (in English) and I (in Japanese) asked the same questions to the same participants in different settings, eliciting divergent responses. Our lightweight and un-obtrusive filmmaking and sound-recording equipment was plainly visible and we had secured permission to use them as appropriate throughout. Since we took a "participatory" and "collaborative" filmmaking approach, participants often suggested to us activities, venues and even soundtrack elements (ritual musical instruments and recorded audio tracks). Our intent was to help create greater camaraderie and trust while also increasing the overall sense of enjoyment and common purpose.

Each evening Abela and I sat down in a makeshift editing station at Sangakurin to catalogue and select video and audio recordings. The idea was to begin editing while the sounds, smells, tastes and tactile sensations were fresh; where we could still hear the roar of the cicadas and feel the relentless and bone-tiring humidity of Japan's rainy season. Our fellow ascetics and

guides provided feedback on rough edits. Deeper insights and connections became possible when collaborators could see and hear the ways Abela and I attempted to represent them. At no other point in my research had I managed to communicate as vividly to co-participants how I saw them and understood the reasons why they did what they did. No conference paper, article or book chapter elicited as much interest or engagement as early drafts of the documentary.[5] Co-participants appeared to gain confidence in our level of understanding and invested in the project once they saw early edits on our laptops. Certain individuals revealed more of their inner experiences and participated more fully in our project once they had a hand in shaping our representation. With feedback, our portrait became more complete.

For certain individuals this deeper engagement did not occur until after we had already left Japan. Upon completion of a rough cut of the documentary, we shipped DVDs to our principal characters for review. Things certainly came into sharper focus in light of the feedback we received from co-participants, including various sectarian rivalries, accusations of heterodoxy and jealousy about perceived inequities of screen time. None of this had previously come out before bringing a camera and the possibility of reaching a global audience into the field. Based upon their critique and suggestions we negotiated revisions we felt were warranted. After receiving a more positive evaluation of the revised film, we felt comfortable releasing it to the public.

Abela and I eschewed formal, on-camera interviews and did not use any written questionnaires or surveys. Participants often showed us with their actions (rather than simply tell us in words) their responses to our questions about motivation and integration of practices in

[5] French visual anthropologist Jean Rouch relates similar benefits of feedback from research participants in Niger, Paris and elsewhere. Sorko fishermen in Niger explained that the stirring soundtrack music (*Gawe Gawe,* a local form of song) Rouch selected was totally inappropriate because it would "give courage to the hippopotamus, and he would escape!" (Rouch 1995[1974]:224).

daily life. Rather than ask specific questions or set up particular scenarios for filming, we tried as much as was possible to wait patiently for interesting moments to occur and then capture them in sound and video. This method imposed greater discipline and patience. This is not to say certain moments were not "staged" for the camera when they could not be captured on the fly. Or that the presence of two large and sleep-deprived North Americans with camera equipment did not alter behavior. We were much, much more than mere flies on the wall. And certainly the footage we captured bears the imprint of our presence.

Historian of religions Barbara Ambros, reflecting upon the experience of producing the documentary *Opening the Gates to Heaven* (2005), suggests that the relationship between researcher-filmmaker and research participants might be best understood as a "catalyst" interacting with "free agents" (2009:176). Ambros admits having felt a "stinging sense of guilt" (2009:176) for having influenced the decision to conduct waterfall rituals in her presence no participant could recall ever having undertaken during previous mountain ascent. Ambros captured the rare practices on film in her documentary and they were reported in a local newspaper article headlined "Tradition Revived," but insists that confraternity members were "free agents" who "had reasons—their own reasons—to stage rituals" (2009:177). Abela and I similarly interjected our agency as catalysts throughout the filmmaking process, but participants were free agents who suggested and participated only in those activities and events they found interesting and meaningful.

Though this thesis must stand separate from and satisfy a different set of objectives than the documentary film co-produced with Abela, I feel it is important to indicate where relevant how the presence of the camera and two Western filmmakers impinged upon research findings and interactions with collaborators. Revealing what takes place on the other side of the camera demonstrates how non-fiction documentaries are highly constructed artifacts that arise from the

agency and interaction of filmmakers and participants, not the gods (MacDougall cited in Barbash and Taylor 2001:3). In the thesis I reveal how my subjectivity has intertwined with research co-participants and shapes my representation of them.[6]

IV. Research context and contributions[7]

A. Shugendô and Japanese religious studies

Shugendô is a mountain ascetic tradition not well studied or understood outside of Japan. Few Japanese beyond practitioners and academic specialists know much, if anything, about this esoteric vehicle. Voluminous archival research from a sociological perspective (Miyake 1999[1970], 1999[1985], 1990, 2001) and folklore studies approach (Gorai 2007-2009, 1970, 1989, 1994) has been published by Japanese scholars beginning in the 1970s. A primary concern has been positioning Shugendô as a "folk religion." The first monographs written in Western languages in the 1960s and 1970s drew heavily upon Miyake and Gorai's groundbreaking work. The first generation of Western scholars (Earhart 1970; Renondeau 1965; Rotermund 1968; Blacker 1975) focused upon Miyake and Gorai's research interests and made use of the annotated primary sources they and their research assistants prepared.

Fieldwork to supplement textual studies by Blacker, Earhart and Miyake in the 1960s and 1970s was limited in scope to the discrete frame of ascetic practices undertaken during formal mountain entry rituals in rural settings. The graduate students they mentored, including UK-based Australian historian Gaynor Sekimori and French feminist anthropologist Anne-Marie Bouchy, who are regarded as the most knowledgeable and experienced Western researchers in

[6] This notion of "intertwined subjectivities" was first suggested to me by Dr. Norma Joseph during a conversation about a doctoral exam on self-reflexivity. Personal communication, January 2012, Montréal.

[7] What follows is a representative, not exhaustive literature review.

the nascent sub-field of Shugendô studies, have undertaken more extensive participant-observer fieldwork and uncovered surprising archival materials decaying in storehouses (Bouchy 1977; Mori 1984).

The recent bilingual (French/English) publication of papers given at the 2008 Columbia University Shugendô Symposium (Faure, Sekimori and Moerman 2009) includes some much-anticipated research into contemporary Shugendô practices by a new generation of Japanese scholars. Musicologist Ôuchi Fumi's creative investigation of Lotus Sutra chanting through the lens of the vocal arts provides fresh perspective and field data (Ôuchi 2009). With few exceptions, the Columbia Symposium's emphasis remains upon professional and elite ascetics embedded within institutional hierarchies, not lay practitioners or rank and file membership.[8] And in the fields of visual ethnography and documentary filmmaking, there are only a few compelling representations of Japanese religious traditions that do not highlight the perspectives and experiences of priestly elites or monastic practitioners (Mendel 2006; Nakamura 2010; Roth and Roth 2010). There is therefore ample space to contribute to a better understanding of how diverse, urban lay practitioners integrate the experience of mountain ascetic training in daily life.

B. Juxtaposing mountain austerities with city life

Daily interactions, challenges, and hardships within home, work, and social life are conceived of as "austerities" (修行 *shugyô*) by Shugendô priests and urban lay practitioners in our contemporary "civilization without pain" (Tanaka 2005). They are thus seen on a continuum with austerities undertaken during mountain retreats within Shugendô's non-dualistic worldview. The idea for this juxtaposition between mountain and home praxis is inspired by and an attempt to embody the contemporary Shugendô teaching for lay people espoused by priest-guides such as

[8] Sekimori touches briefly upon contemporary lay practitioners' experiences in her paper on the revival of Nikko and Koshikidake Shugendô (2009:62-3).

Tanaka Riten, “From mountain austerities to home austerities” (山の行より里の行へ *Yama no gyô yori sato no gyô e*).[9]

My decision to interact with urban ascetics in mountains and metropolises arose from a basic curiosity and pragmatism. There is limited time for even brief conversations during the unrelenting pace of ritual mountain ascent nor would it be appropriate.[10] I also wanted to learn how the experience changed, if at all, the outlook and daily lives of urban ascetics. Upon my own return to the city (Montreal), I discovered conceptions of short bouts of religious ascesis written by scholars of pilgrimage in India, Japan, Israel and Palestine as a “round trip” (Gold 1988:1-2), "Way of Life" (Reader 2005:249-50) and a “home/away dialectic” (Kaell forthcoming). This scholarship investigates the ways that participants continuously interpret their daily lives through the lens of their pilgrimage experience.[11] Traditional boundaries in ascetics’ and researchers’ minds between mountain austerities and city life are actively being contested and reformulated in Gold, Reader and Kaell’s scholarship.

Lay practitioner and international banker Ozaki Hitoshi’s comments cited in the Epigraph about initial assumptions and subsequent embodied understanding of the teaching “From mountain austerities to home austerities” confirm the relevance of this new focus on integration in academic research. Emphasizing the experience of mountain austerities outside of and set apart from everyday life in urban settings carries the further danger of depicting a modern nation like Japan as two geographic and cultural solitudes: dense urban landscapes on the one hand, and

[9] Tanaka introduced this simplified teaching during each orientation meeting of the Lotus Ascent. He also made frequent reference to it throughout the ritual ascent in oral commentary delivered at worship sites (Personal communication, July 2002, 2003, 2007, Yoshino).

[10] I know this from experience having been reprimanded for asking questions of priest guides along the way (Gojô Kakugyô, personal communication, July 2002, Mount Ômine).

[11] Dr. Hillary Kael’s fieldwork among American female Catholic and Evangelical Christian Holy Land pilgrims focuses upon integration of the “extraordinary” experience of departing home within the “ordinary” role of family religious specialist (forthcoming).

a network of rural mountain training sites on the other. But how do the two interact and inter-relate?

Very few academics or filmmakers in Japan and the West have begun to investigate experiences of urban, lay practitioners of Shugendô in any sustained fashion.[12] This community will be my focus in the thesis. In doing so, I have the opportunity to make empirical, theoretical and audio-visual contributions to Shugendô studies, Japanese religious studies, the academic study of asceticism, Japanese popular cultural studies and pilgrimage studies. I can also contribute to a new understanding of how a tradition is being creatively reinvented to suit the needs of diverse, urban lay practitioners in the twenty-first century.

C. Innovation in the academic study of asceticism

Because Shugendô is regarded within Japan as an ascetic practice (修行 *shugyô*) rather than a form of pilgrimage (巡礼 *junrei*), I examine the tradition primarily in light of the history, methods and theoretical frameworks within the academic study of asceticism rather than pilgrimage studies. Recent scholars examine asceticism across diverse cultural traditions and call into question the persistent and pejorative representations of the ascetic as social deviant, outcast and masochist.[13] Contemporary scholars who examine a broader range of sources have provided more complete portraits of asceticism as a mainstream current within nearly every cultural and religious tradition (Brown 1971, 1988; Wimbush and Valantasis 1995) and place it firmly within a social and political context (Valantasis 1995:544-52).

[12] Photojournalist Fujita Shôichi, who has an M.A. in Philosophy from Taishô University, has examined the experiences of lay practitioners, though, he, too, privileges otherworldly concerns (1995:117-179). Fujita's work is presented on pp. 100.

[13] For an illustration of this tendency in a well-known reference work, see William Kaelber's entry for asceticism in the *Encyclopedia of Religion* (1987:Vol.I, 445).

Theorist Geoffrey Harpham, touching upon Rousseau's notion of entry into the "social contract," and Freud's compensatory model in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, has even argued that an "ascetic imperative" is the "MS-DOS" of cultural and social life with wide implications for our understanding of the body, ethics, aesthetics and artistic creation (Harpham 1987:vii). Arguing for a "loose" definition of asceticism that encompasses "any act of self-denial undertaken as a strategy of empowerment and gratification" in opposition to a "tight" definition restricting the term to historical practices undertaken by early Christians, Harpham has provocatively drawn attention to the ascetic imperative in nearly every realm of humanistic endeavor (1987:xiii). Harpham also observes that the goal of ascetic practice is to make the self "representable" and "narratable" (1987:27). I suggest that Shugendô participants' creation of an experiential narrative (体験 *taiken*) draws upon discourses of recovery and healing within New Age and New Religious Movements (NRMs) exhorting them to "pick up the scattered fragments of a life and shape them into a single story" (Yumiyama 1994:270). To date, few scholars of Japanese religions have applied these new insights from theoretical and transcultural research on asceticism.

I do not wish to imply that Shugendô mountain entry rituals cannot be fruitfully analyzed as a form of pilgrimage. I emphasize the ascetic dimensions of mountain training and focus upon urban lay participants' integration of lessons learned from mountain learning back home in the cities of Osaka and Tokyo. I do so because I am more interested in the "engagement" element in the spaces participants depart from and return to, rather than the "escape" or "retreat" elements of time spent in mountains (e.g., the pilgrimage). I emphasize integration of the pilgrimage

experience with my analysis of participants in the Lotus Ascent of Mount Ômine[14] and Tateishi Kôshô's "eco-pilgrimage."[15]

D. Shugendô as an element of civil society

The thesis's final contribution is the potential application of a civil society framework to contemporary Shugendô communities. Characterized as seeking neither market share nor state power, civil society groups are composed of individuals and groups who bind members together around their vision of a "good society" to take action in service of the public interest.[16] Although the concept of civil society arose from reflections on the Western Protestant conception of separation between church and state (Habermas 1989), social scientists of East Asia have realized the category has fruitful application beyond its European origins. As historian of religion Helen Hardacre has written,

> It will be useful for social scientists to consider religious groups as one kind of organization in civil society, and useful also for scholars of religion to view fluctuations in the religious world alongside changes in civil society as a whole (Hardacre 2004:390).

Going beyond prejudiced generalizations of religious praxis in the 21st Century as "compensatory" responses to "contradictions and disruptions of modernization" and globalization, Hardacre creatively deploys a civil society framework to the fields of Japanese religious and social life (2004:390). Hardacre focuses upon religious organizations' activities in the decade following the Kobe-Awaji earthquake (1995), Aum Supreme Truth subway attack (1995), NPO Reform Legislation (1998) and large-scale, public protests in Tokyo denouncing the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (2003-4). Japanese religious organizations, in Hardacre's view, have seized such opportunities to regain their moral authority, unite disparate movements for

[14] Discussed on pp. 94, 103-104, 108-109, 113-120.
[15] Discussed on pp. 123-126, 131-135, 140.
[16] This definition is from overlapping conceptions in Hardacre's (2004) and Schwartz's work (2002). Both address applicability beyond Western Protestant contexts.

peace, justice and human rights, and demonstrate that their core values and views are part of the mainstream (2004:390).

As a "portable category" transcending the insular field of Japanese religious studies, the civil society framework may be a promising approach for studying the contemporary Shugendô communities in Shingu, Yoshino, Tokyo and Osaka. In contrast to the conspicuous activities Hardacre discusses, I plan to focus upon quieter and smaller-scale activities in the public sphere undertaken by ascetic standouts Tateishi Kôshô, Tanaka Riten, Gojô Ryôki, Gojô Kakugyô, Harasawa Kenta and a growing number of lay devotees, community members and colleagues. Their embodiment of the teaching "standing out for self and others" (自利利他 *jiri rita*) and attention to the ritual and spiritual needs of their communities dovetails with the goals of certain civil society groups. The performance of public works goes beyond mere *displays* of spiritual attainments, and becomes the *means* of achieving greater realization (Reader 1991:16) .

1. Engagement not retreat

This interrelationship between self and society, spiritual and material benefits lies at the heart of ascetic activity in the public sphere. My understanding of ascetic practices as *engagement not retreat* departs from traditional characterizations of the lone ascetic pursuing solitary devotions far from urban communities. Tateishi Kôshô's environmental stewardship and creation of an eco-pilgrimage for urban guests is one such case. Media-savvy priest Tanaka Riten, who publishes accessible books for lay people, uses Facebook, Twitter, and Skype to communicate his ideas, teachings and activities, is another exceptionally active and engaged modern ascetic intellectual introduced in the thesis. Gojô Junkyô, former Head Abbott of Kinpusenji, is also a prolific writer and speaker, but Tanaka is the first to embrace multi-media platforms in his propagation and promotion of the tradition. I translate key passages in Tanaka's *Fascinating*

Shugendô (2005) and popular blog *En no Gyôja's Fan Club* to bring attention to the modern interpretations given to Shugendô teachings.

V. Chapter overview

In Chapter One I argue that an emphasis upon and critique of transformations in Shugendô landscapes and practices, increasing lay participation and embrace of technology by an earlier generation of Shugendô scholars has obscured the creative process of revival taking place in the present. Not all practitioners regard the development of modern tourist infrastructures and accommodations for lay practitioners' work schedules as uniformly negative. I show how practitioners adapt to changing circumstances in creative ways despite clear and obvious challenges. Archival research from the Edo period shows that controversy and debate about how mountain entry practices ought to be performed in the context of revival are nothing new (Sekimori 2009:66). I present examples of innovative ritual practices such as the "Lotus Ascent" of Mount Ômine and "Slide toward Rebirth" at Tateishi's independent training site to show their efficacy and attraction for a cohort of urban lay participants. The practice of condensing and adapting mountain entry rituals in the contemporary period is placed alongside historical precedents whereby traditional rituals were abbreviated and adapted to suit changing needs. I conclude with an analysis of the procedure whereby lay practitioners learn to construct an experiential narrative (taiken) by means of imitative repetitive performance of more seasoned practitioners' storytelling practices. This process enables them to secure a place for themselves in the tradition and arrive at important new insights about the nature of life circumstances that propelled them up the mountain.

In Chapter Two I discuss the socio-economic and existential conditions of the "Lost Decade(s)" that prompt participation in contemporary Shugendô practices by a certain cohort of disaffected urban ascetics from Tokyo and Osaka. I caution against assuming uniformity of

experience or motivation. Simple enjoyment and curiosity cannot be discounted as motivating another group of participants. I discuss the ways media-savvy Shugendô priests such as Tanaka Riten and their staff, devotees and affiliates have used electronic, print and broadcast media to attract urban lay participants in ritual calendar events. I examine the content and form of promotional and marketing materials embedded within popular cultural materials, including accessible ascetic guidebooks, tourist promotional materials, mainstream TV programs, blogs and social networking sites. Shugendô's hallmark practices and practice spaces are promoted for their efficacy in addressing a great variety of concerns in modern, post-bubble Japan. Four portraits of male practitioners at various stages of their life course and from mixed socioeconomic, geographic and cultural backgrounds are given to illustrate the most common triggers for Shugendô participation. How practitioners integrate or hold separate what they learn in their daily lives in urban settings is also discussed. I corroborate ethnographic findings with a representative sample of the secondary social scientific literature on freeter and NEET communities to problematize popular media and academic representations of precarious workers, dropouts and other un(der)skilled, disadvantaged and lost souls.

In Chapter Three I examine Tateishi's creation of an "eco-pilgrimage" to formerly environmentally degraded sites as an example of "engaged civic pedagogy" (Giroux 2005:179) and response to the "hardship of life" (生辛さ *ikizurasa*) described by Amamiya Karin (2008:x). This illustrates Shugendô practice in forested mountains by urban participants as a form of engagement and energetic confrontation with (and not retreat from) social, economic and ecological crises. A special prayer service and bout of austerities devoted to the repose of individuals who perished during the 11 March 2011 Triple Disaster in Tôhoku is a point of departure for examining Tateishi's role as spiritual teacher and guide for a global cohort of

ascetics at his training site. Tateishi's innovative creation of an eco-pilgrimage and participation in environmental remediation campaigns are situated within Japan's particular social, religious and environmental history. Dumping toxic household waste from the Kobe-Hanshin earthquake (1995) into Kumano's fragile eco-system disrupts practice and despoils sacred training grounds, but also leeches industrial chemicals into the water, air, soil and food supply. Eventually these toxins penetrate local residents' porous bodies and cause serious suffering, pain and even death as they have during previous industrial pollution tragedies in Japan such as at Minamata (Walker 2010:5-8; Nash 2006:210). Tateishi empowers his urban guests to build up their knowledge and skills to become active participants in broad citizens' movements not unlike those which responded to government and industry's failures to prevent methyl-mercury poisoning at Minamata (1930-1960s) (Walker 2010:137-175) and respond effectively to the Kobe-Hanshin earthquake (1995) (McCormack 2001:8-16; Kingston 2004:73-74).

In Chapter Four I analyze the successful campaign to designate the Kii Peninsula a UNESCO World Heritage cultural landscape in 2004. The mobilization, application, commemoration and decision-making processes and debates arising from UNESCO designation together with the inevitable appearance of Shugendô sacred peaks as "hot spots" on domestic and global pilgrim-tourists' travel itineraries are critically examined. An understanding of the broader socio-economic and cultural dimensions of UNESCO is important because World Heritage promotion and tourism (including ubiquitous advertising on television, the Internet and in urban train stations) serve as a prominent gateway for lay people to learn about and encounter Shugendô practices and training grounds. Designation as World Heritage and the resultant tourist deluge directly impacts the experience of doing Shugendô and how participants understand their experiences in complex ways. I present perspectives from practitioners, priests, local community members, scholars and officials from Japan's Ministry of Culture and UNESCO about the

impacts of designation. I argue that Japan's UNESCO experiences reveal how revitalization of sagging tourist economies often trumps protection and preservation of cultural heritage. The ironies of Japan's UNESCO World Heritage designations are compared with contradictions in Japan's national park, national treasure and important cultural property legislation. Priorities of development over conservation and tourist exploitation over preservation are interrogated. Finally, I examine how the introduction of a global notion of culture interacts and collides with pre-existing conceptions of and debates about the physical danger of practices, gender and national identity.

In the Conclusion I summarize the key questions, concerns and contributions of the thesis by comparing and contrasting the personalities, approaches and achievements of Tanaka Riten and Tateishi Kôshô. I assess Tanaka's innovations in praxis and use of conventional and social media to cast the net as far and wide as possible to invite members of the general public to try Shugendô. What have been the results of his experiments? What are the implications for his temple and tradition? How have these experiments been received by veterans and newcomers? I also analyze Tateishi's quiet example of self-sufficiency and attempts to increase biodiversity within a landscape dominated by abandoned rice fields and monocultural timber plantation. My aim is to present the ways the ascetic standout understands his vocation as protector and steward of Kumano's mythic landscape and compromised ecosystem. In light of Gavin McCormack's analysis of Japan's unsustainable and "neocolonial" agricultural and food policies (McCormack 2001:144), I argue that Tateishi's activities have implications beyond his isolated, rural community and have the potential to inspire transformations in Japanese, regional and global consciousness one participant at a time.

CHAPTER ONE

ANY MORE 'REAL' MOUNTAIN ASCETICS AROUND HERE?

I. Introduction

I first met several of the individuals profiled below during preliminary fieldwork in Yoshino (Nara) in the summer of 2002. I remember asking, quite naively, at Kinpusenji temple's reception desk, "Are there any more 'real' mountain ascetics around here?" What an impression that must have made upon the middle-aged gentleman seated before me who, I subsequently learned, devoted the better part of his adult life to performing ritual ascent of Mount Ômine. My naive skepticism had been shaped by previous ethnographers' reports that Shugendô participants in the 1960s and 1970s rode buses, taxis and express trains between worship sites (Swanson 1981:63) and guides' "supernaturally resonant" chanting of *Rokkon shôjô* was amplified by loudspeakers (Blacker 1975:296). I therefore incorrectly assumed there would be little worth investigating in 21st Century Shugendô mountain entry practices.

My initial research trip to Kinpusenji coincided with the arrival of several hundred participants in the annual Frog Hop (蛙飛び *kaeru tobi*) and Lotus Ascent (蓮華入峯 *Renge nyubu*) of Mount Ômine.[17] I discovered that a campaign by conventional media (1980s) and Internet and social media (1990s-present) had been undertaken by Tanaka Riten and his staff and affiliates to promote interest and participation by the general public. Their efforts included seeking designation of their ascetic training grounds as a UNESCO World Heritage cultural landscape. Strolling the souvenir shops, teahouses and noodle shops outside Kinpusenji temple's imposing gate I noticed tourists and ritual participants in full regalia purchasing yamabushi rice

[17] Common referents for mountain ascetics are *yamabushi* (山伏 "those who crouch in the mountain") and *shugenja* (修験者 "Shugendô practitioner"). When describing lay people who take part in condensed rituals I follow Kinpusenji's terminology by calling them "participants" (参加者 *sankasha*).

Figure 1.1 Conch shell trumpets for sale at Kuruma-ya, Yoshino, 2003.

crackers (煎餅 *senbei*) and tiny porcelain conch shells. These sure signs of degeneration, commodification and exoticization of Shugendô sites, practices and gear led me to assume that its mountain entry rituals, some as short as overnight ascents, were no longer "authentic" or meaningful. Whatever interest remains, I thought, had probably been inspired by a successful marketing campaign and the nostalgia of urban tourists for an "authentic encounter" with rural archaic practices (Ivy 1988; Creighton 1997). But after participating in the Lotus Ascent, I shed my cynicism.

Figure 1.2 Saitô goma at Kinpusenji, Yoshino, 2003.

That afternoon a shugenja with a lacquered bow slung over his shoulder appeared before an assembly of several hundred ascetics and an equivalent number of tourists and locals. After speaking some incomprehensible medieval syllables amplified by a loudspeaker, he sent arrows into the four cardinal directions to inaugurate ritual time. A large pile of neatly stacked cedar logs cloaked in greenery was set aflame (紫灯護摩 *saitô goma*) while sutra chanting, drumming, conch blowing and flash photography began in earnest (Figure 1.2). The impressive turnout, freshness of ascetics' robes and crispness of each gesture suggested this event was a well-choreographed and financed ritual performance.

Observations during my first hours of fieldwork in Yoshino echo certain changes to the landscape, mood and scale of participation at another Shugendô training site—Mount Ontake (御嶽山 elevation: 3,067 meters), northeast of Nagoya—described by Carmen Blacker in 1967.

> A large "driveway" or motor road had been carved out of the mountainside as far as the seventh stage, Tanohara. You need not walk at all, we were told, before

> Tanohara, and there you will find a comfortable hotel. (…) Up the hairpin bends of the new road there roared a stream of traffic, taxis, cars, buses hired by kô [講 confraternities], with straw hats and wooden poles projecting from the windows. (…) We had not been going long before we encountered an enormous kô from Kyoto, 400 strong and led by a huge man reminiscent of a Kabuki actor or *sumô* wrestler. He stood on a rock at the side of the path, bellowing the *rokkon shôjô* chant in a voice which seemed supernaturally resonant until I saw that he was in fact shouting through a microphone attached to a powerful loudspeaker. His huge flock moved slowly and ponderously upwards. They had no medium, we were told. Their leader always told them what to do. (…) Hugely amplified, the voice of the actor-wrestler from Kyoto ceaselessly chattered, warning, admonishing, introducing, *explaining* every step of the rite to the crowd surrounding him, as a radio commentator explains a baseball match or an unfamiliar ceremony. Ruthlessly he had destroyed the magic of the rite (1974:296-7).

Yoshino's paved roads, cable car, concrete hotels and other modern tourist amenities also date to the 1960s. Landscape photographs of Kinpusenji and Yoshino made by Irie Taikichi (入江泰吉) in 1958 show only modest wooden residences, traditional guest houses and unpaved roads in the area surrounding the temple complex (Shogakukan 2001:17).[18] Large-scale participation by lay practitioners began in the 1980s when Tanaka Riten began "sending a direct call out to the general public" (Personal communication, July 2007, Yoshino). From the post-war period to the 1980s, mountain entry rituals at Mount Ômine were only very sparsely attended by Kinpusenji priests and affiliated staff (Tanaka, personal communication, July 2007, Yoshino). Ponderously slow processions of primarily first-time participants are now common, as are explanations for unfamiliar rites similar to play-by-play sports commentary. After all, Shugendô is an esoteric tradition without household name recognition in Japan or the West.

Kinpusenji priest Tanaka Riten is no Kabuki star but the bespectacled ascetic intellectual has charisma in abundance. His efforts to demystify and simplify practices for the public may result in some loss of magic, but the majority of contemporary lay participants in Kinpusenji's

[18] Irie's photographs are in the permanent collection of the Nara Art Photography Museum.

ritual calendar events have mundane aspirations. This-worldly motivations may have also brought Kyoto confraternity members by the busload to Mount Ontake in the late 1960s, but we do not know for sure because Blacker and her cohort focused upon mediums, diviners and other ecstatic professionals.

Until the widespread exploitation of Japan's natural resources to build empire and nation in the nineteenth century, Shugendô training practices could be conducted in relative isolation in pristine natural areas. Paving over forest, stringing up power lines and building concrete hotels and teahouses has profoundly altered landscapes, ascetic practices and the health and safety of local communities. Yet increased access to modern transport, lodging and media creates new possibilities not held in universal disdain. As shown in this chapter, priests, practitioners and community members respond to these transformations in diverse and unexpected ways.

To give one brief example, in the film *Là où les montagnes volent* Carina and Sandra Roth document contemporary practitioners in Kumano carrying out traditional waterfall ablutions (滝の行 *taki no gyô*) despite incursions of modern development (2010). Passages from the 12th Century *Shozan engi* (諸山縁起 "Origins of Various Shrines and Temples") are used as voice-over for scenes depicting sites where miracles evoked in the text are claimed to have occurred. [19] Against a backdrop of rock faces, waterfalls, and rivers "tamed" by metal fencing and concrete reinforcement walls, we see practitioners perform ablutions and seek identification with Fudô myô-ô (不動明王 *S. Acala*). A gentleman from Osaka who arises each morning before work to enter a constructed "waterfall" (a downspout from a concrete river with retaining wall and dam)

[19] The *Shozan Engi* is discussed further on pp. 66-68. See Miyata 1976:91-108 for original classical Japanese source text.

demonstrate that meaningful, sustained practice is possible despite modern development and excesses of the construction state (土建国家 *doken kokka*).[20]

Figure 1.3 Ritual ablutions in a retention dam, Wakayama. Production still, *Là où les montagnes volent* (Roth & Roth 2010). Used with permission.

Western visitors and residents (including this author) often report surprise and disappointment about the state of Japan's natural environment, particularly in sites designated National Treasures, Important Cultural Properties, National Parks and UNESCO World Heritage.[21] Such critique should be balanced with comparative research from Western and Asian-Pacific observers' own nations' preservation and conservation efforts. When compared with countries of similar size, Japan (29 national parks comprising 5.4 percent of its land) has protected slightly less than the United Kingdom (14 parks; 8 per cent), Korea (17 parks; 6.6 per

[20] Japan's construction state is discussed further on pp. 183, 141-146.
[21] Impacts of World Heritage designation are discussed on pp. 175-196.

cent), and New Zealand (14 parks; 11.5 per cent); and a bit more than Canada and the US, whose parks account for 2 per cent of total land (Knight 2010:2).

Blacker's seminal text *The Catalpa Bow* is widely assigned in undergraduate survey courses and graduate seminars on the strength of its elegant prose, status as a classic and for being exemplary of a certain type of analysis influenced by early Japanese folklorists. Her descriptions from 50 years ago continues to influence Anglo-American scholars and students because few ethnographic studies in English have appeared in the intervening years. When confronted by the gap between ecstatic professionals' sustained mountain training in the past and lay people's occasional participation in condensed rituals in the present, assumptions regarding degeneration and loss are unsurprising. My aim is not to critique Blacker and other giants whose shoulders we stand upon. I simply point out that in the absence of contemporary accounts analyzing majority lay practices in compromised ecosystems, overhasty value judgments regarding authenticity and meaning are made despite evidence the tradition is alive and well.

My own realization about the need for balance in assessing contemporary Shugendô practices within compromised eco-systems occurred in 2007 during a casual lunch with Tateishi Kôshô after I thoughtlessly complained about all the driving we were doing to reach remote training sites selected for location filming for the documentary.

"Not very ascetic," I rushed to judge.

Tateishi responded by directing an ecological dharma talk at me on the subject of "eco-fanaticism" to a group of devotees in suburban Shingu.

> If we reflect upon the good things our mothers taught us, we realize that we have this "Eco-logic" within us. How best might we use our minds, bodies and hands to improve our relationship to the environment? Certainly this means what we do in our homes, on our land and in our relationships. This is what is most important. But if we don't set priorities we risk becoming "eco-fanatics" who lose touch. "No communication." So let's not become fanatics. Instead remain calm, live gently and quietly (Personal communication, July 2007, Shingu).

Tateishi's gentle admonition comes across on film as a spontaneous communication to devotees. But it seems more likely that it was my lack of gratitude for his patience, time, and generous assistance together with misplaced carbon emissions angst that provoked Tateishi to raise this subject on camera. Audiences respond favorably to this scene, but few realize further context is needed to understand the ways my subjectivity intertwined with Tateishi's and his devotees' that afternoon.

In this chapter I argue that an emphasis upon and critique of transformations in Shugendô landscapes and practices, increasing lay participation and embrace of technology by an earlier generation of Shugendô scholars has obscured the creative process of revival taking place in the present. Subsequent generations have perpetuated this lack of balance in our initial evaluation of recent transformations. This chapter is offered as a modest corrective. Recently discovered archival evidence reveals that condensation of hallmark practices and debates sparked by these transformations are not new (Sekimori 2009:66). What is new, however, is increasing lay participation in Shugendô rituals. I present innovative ritual practices created by Tanaka Riten at Kinpusenji and Tateishi Kôshô at Sangakurin to show intriguing patterns in this creative process of renewal and transformation.

Figure 1.4 Lotus Ascent of Mount Ômine, 2003.

II. Renewal and transformation at Mount Ômine

A. Moment of Truth

I first recognized that Shugendô has continued resonance and meaning at Mount Ômine's summit (山上ケ岳 *Sanjô ga take*) in 2002. We had just completed the day's final rite of repentance and rebirth—an ordeal requiring each first-time participant be suspended headfirst over an 800-foot ravine by a slender hemp rope (西の覗き *Nishi no nozoki*). Regarded as a ritual of "throwing away the body" (捨身行 *shashingyô*) and "Gazing West" toward Amida's Pure Land, this shock technique aimed at catharsis and healing has enduring relevance and value. While dangling over the cliff, three questions are posed: "Will you respect your parents? Do you promise to study hard? Have you confessed all of your transgressions?" The moment guides accept participants' repentance as sincere, they release the rope's tension to give the sensation of momentary free fall and an instant adrenaline rush. Swanson describes this as "unforgettable and

heart-stopping, a moment of truth" (1981:70). Following this split-second confrontation with the abyss, participants are made to recite a secret poem (秘歌 *hika*):

Thanks to the Western Gaze
We have confessed
And can joyfully enter
The Pure Land of Amida (Gorai 1970:181).[22]

Just beside the Nishi no nozoki site is a cliff called the Nihon Iwa. It is reputed to have been formerly used for disposing dead bodies in the early modern period (Swanson 1981:72). Men who could not complete the course because of exhaustion, illness or injury were thought to be punished for past transgressions. Rather than interrupt others' practice, legend has it that the "dead" were thrown over the cliff to be reborn in the valley below (Swanson 1981:72). This real possibility of injury and death persists, but participants who become sick or injured during the Lotus Ascent today have other options than being hurled to their death over the Nihon Iwa.[23] Paved access roads are seldom far and reliable taxi service can be hailed by cellular phone.[24]

[22] Translation by Swanson (1981:70).

[23] Many of Japan's mountains have been ranked by degree of mountaineering difficulty. See http://climber.org/data/decimal.html for a description, guide, and critique of the widely used Yosemite Decimal System. Accessed 16 January 1013. Dr. Matthew Penney kindly made me aware of these ranking systems. Mount Ômine (1600m) appears not to have been ranked from what I gleaned from an Internet search. Mount Fuji (3,776 m) and Mount Ontake (3,067 m) are considered more demanding. The mountaineering ranking system, with its emphasis upon degree of physical challenge and topographical features (including permanent climbing infrastructure), cannot accurately measure the psychological *and* physical degree of difficulty without also taking into account the simultaneous practice of fasting, forgoing sufficient water, sleep and so on. There is the added difficulty, if not impossibility, of assessing the treacherous nature of ascetics' interior landscapes. Interpersonal, psychological and spiritual traumas immeasurably raise the risks. As a former college athlete in relatively good shape for my age, I have found the climbing and limited rock climbing portions (with installed chains) at Ômine to be demanding in dry weather conditions. Recovery took two full days—similar to the physical toll of running a marathon. With steady rain and strong winds, however, ascending Ômine becomes more dangerous and painful, demanding greater concentration and stamina. Only a very few portions are "life-threatening" under such circumstances for the attentive and physically and mentally fit. But I have heard first-hand accounts of grave and debilitating injuries requiring surgery and

Figure 1.5 Nishi no nozoki atop Mount Ômine, 2002.

A 1977 NHK television broadcast on the Yoshino-Kumano Okugake trail (大峰奥駆けの道 *Ômine Okugake no michi*) in the series "Travel Accounts of New Japan" (新日本紀行 *Shin nihon yûkô*) documents Kyoto Shugendô temple Shogo-In's reopening of the trail after decades

hospitalization. Tateishi Rika tells the story of her fall and convalescence in Kumano in *Shugendô Now* (Abela and McGuire 2009:1h4m-1h6m40s).

[24] During each of the three occasions I participated in the Lotus Ascent (2002, 2003 and 2007) approximately ten percent of the 120 participants had to take early leave from the course due to injury, exhaustion or illness.

of disuse.[25] The form and content of the rituals represented in the broadcast appear very similar to how they are carried out in the present. Ironically, twenty-first century practice has the appearance of being "more traditional" in the sense that today's lay participants are more likely than their 1970s counterparts to wear white linen ascetics' robes and carry gear similar to the priests (NHK 1977). In the NHK broadcast, lay participants appear on camera wearing blue jeans and carrying colorful rucksacks.

Shortly after completion of the Nishi no nozoki in 2003, we found ourselves crammed into the entrance of a smoky ascetics' lodge. We struggled out of filthy raingear and waterlogged shoes with a sense of accomplishment and delight that a warm meal and sleep would soon be ours. I was taken aback to hear spasms of uncontrolled sobbing beside me. Tears of terror, relief and catharsis. The rest of the men at the lodge, who had experienced the Nishi no nozoki themselves, radiated silent empathy toward our shaken companion. At this moment of exhaustion, elation, camaraderie and fellowship, I remembered with embarrassment the congratulatory cynicism I felt when I met this gentleman the previous day at Kuruma-ya, the yamabushi shop in Yoshino. He was buying a new sutra book. A new conch shell was slung around his neck with a braided hemp rope. "What self-respecting yamabushi would corner a foreigner near the animal pelts to practice his English?" I could see his nostalgia from a mile away, or so I thought.

As I have gotten to know Harasawa Kenta over the past decade, I have grown to appreciate the depth of his engagement with Shugendô and civic life. Fluent in English and German, he wrote a Ph.D. dissertation at Waseda University on the music of Wagner. The conch came easily after a dozen years playing the trumpet. Dedicated to teaching about the

[25] Paul Swanson kindly provided a rare copy of the 1977 NHK broadcast. Swanson appears as a young graduate student joining in the revived Okugake trail.

"dissociation" of Buddhist and Shintô divinities and State Shintô nationalism, Harasawa, in his capacity as a UNESCO regional general secretary, encourages the creation of more informative and inclusive, multi-lingual pamphlets and museums at Nikkô's famed shrines and temples.[26] Harasawa suggests visitors to sacred sites should be offered something more meaningful than an exotic backdrop for a hasty group photo taken in haste.

Harasawa pleads with community members and tourist cooperatives that World Heritage encompasses much more than tangible architecture, expanded parking lots and increased numbers of foreign and domestic tourists. There is also the intangible heritage of centuries of practice aimed at "becoming one with the natural environment" (大自然と一体に成る *daishizen to ittai ni naru*) (Harasawa 2002:4). At stake in this practice of compassionately "exchanging self for Other" (入我 我入 *nyuga ga'nyu*), writes Harasawa, is fulfilling UNESCO's ideals of cross-cultural understanding, eliminating armed combat and environmental and cultural preservation (Harasawa 2002:4).

B. Condensing rituals and inspiring lay practice

Harasawa is by no means an atypical contemporary Shugendô practitioner. In addition to UNESCO responsibilities, he manages a local utilities company. Deeply embedded within the social, political and economic life of the mid-sized town of Nikkô, he strives to integrate lessons learned from mountain training as a member of the recently revived Nikkô Shugendô tradition. With the exception of a large temple like Kinpusenji, modern Shugendô temples lack the means to support full-time, ordained priests. The majority of practitioners must therefore work for a living. Shugendô priest Koshikidake Shôkai actually refuses students who do not work full-time, secular jobs on the belief that only those who experience "life in all its pollutions" have the

[26] The dissociation of Buddhist and Shintô divinities is discussed further on pp. 167-68.

capacity to save others (Sekimori 2009:65). Koshikake Shôkai idealizes this situation through the figure of semi-legendary seventh century Shugendô patriarch En no Gyôja (役行者 "En the ascetic") who is said to have moved fluidly between the mundane and spiritual realms (Sekimori 2009:65).

En no Gyôja's first appearance in the historical record is an entry dated 699 in the *Shoku Nihongi* (続日本紀 "The Continued Chronicles of Japan"):

> 5th month, 24th day: En-no-Kimi-Ozunu was banished to the peninsula of Izu. Originally Ozunu had lived on Katsuragiyama [present-day Wakayama] and had been reputed as an adept in magic. Karakuni no Muraji, Hirotari…took him as his teacher. Later, jealous of his art, he slandered him in saying that he led people astray by weird arts and therefore was banished to a far-away place. It was said among the population that he often commanded spirits to draw water or to gather firewood for him. If they did not obey his orders, he bound them with magic (Snellen 1934 V.IX:178-9).

The magician banished for subjugating native divinities later became associated with mountain asceticism and the Mahayana Buddhist ideal of the lay householder.[27] In the *Nihon Ryôiki* (日本霊異記 "A Record of Miraculous Tales of Japan"), a ninth century collection of Buddhist sermons, we find a record of En the Householder (役の優婆塞 *En no ubasoku*, S. *upāsaka*).[28] The twenty-eighth tale is entitled, "On Practicing the Formula of the Peacock King,[29] thus

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[27] On the Mahayana ideal of the lay householder, see the *Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa Sūtra* (First century CE). Translated several times into Chinese beginning in the late first century CE, Kumarajiva's fourth century translation is the most well known (維摩詰所説經 *Weimojie Suoshuo Jing*, Taishō Tripiṭaka 475). Robert Thurman's English translation is highly readable (2000).

[28] The following texts contain the classical source text and modern Japanese annotated translation (Kyôkai & Izumoji 1996:220) and English translation (Kyôkai and Nakamura 1973:141). For studies of En no Gyôja's mythic career, see Earhart 1965; Swanson 1999; Keenan 1989, 1999.

[29] Originally a female Hindu deity, *Mahamayuri*, when incorporated into the Buddhist pantheon, has undergone repeated gender transformations in Tibet (*Ma-bya-chen-mo*), China (孔雀明王 *Kongqiao ming wang* "Peacock King" and 佛母孔雀明王 *Fo mu da kongqiao ming* "The Great Radiant Peacock Queen") and Japan (孔雀明王 *Kujaku myô-ô* "Peacock King"). For

Obtaining Exceptional Powers to Become an Immortal in this Lifetime and Fly to Heaven" (Izumoji 1996:220).[30] En the Householder confines himself in a cave, clothes himself in wysteria vines, and subsists on a diet of dewdrops from pine needles (Izumoji 1996:220). The secret to his having attained flight is mastery in recitation of the Peacock King *dharani* (陀羅尼 S. *dhāraṇī*)[31] (Izumoji 1996:220).[32]

This evocative passage from the *Nihon ryôki* is known to contemporary lay practitioners by its appearance in contemporary Shugendô guidebooks. In Volume 8 of Gakken's *Books Esoterica* series on Shugendô (修験道の本 *Shugendô no hon*), the passage appears on the inside dusk jacket in muscular white script on a black background (Gakken 1993:6). Pronunciation is given in *furigana* superscript for unfamiliar terms like dharani and Peacock King Dharani. A photograph of a thirteenth century statue enshrined in the Peacock King Hall on Mount Koya accompanies details about rainmaking and other hoped-for outcomes for which this proto-Tantric sutra is said to be efficacious (Gakken 1993:164). En no Gyôja's biography and depictions in canonical artwork (Gakken 1993:30-33) precedes photographs, descriptions of

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an historical study, see de Visser 1980[1919-20]:193-96. For a more recent study and the first complete translation in any Western language, see des Jardins 2011.

[30] Original Sino-Japanese text: 修持孔雀王呪得異験力以現作仙飛天緑第廿ハ。

[31] Chinese religions scholar Paul Copp defines *dhāraṇī* as an Indian Sanskrit term meaning, "to support or to hold. (…) As spoken incantations, the efficacy of both mantras and *dhāraṇīs* is usually said to inhere in their correctly pronounced syllables, rather than in the meanings of those syllables, though commentaries and glosses on examples of both genres were produced in scholastic contexts across Buddhist Asia." Search "Mantras and Dhāraṇīs" from the Oxford Bibliographies on-line (www.oxfordbibliographies.com) for the complete definition and a bibliography of further sources. Accessed 4 February 2013.

[32] Kyôkai does not specify in the *Nihon ryôiki* which version of the Mayamayuri Sutra En the Householder was purported to have had access to. The version brought back to Japan by Kûkai in the ninth century was produced by Indian sramana Amaghavajra (不空 Fu Kong), the master of Kûkai's teacher Hui Guo. Amoghavajra's eighth century translation of the *Mahamayuri vijarajñi sutra* was rendered in Chinese as 佛母大孔雀明王経 (*Fo mu da kongqiao ming wang jing* "The Great Radiant Peacock Queen's Sutra.") Taishô XIX, 982 416a.19-433b.10.

ritual calendar events and the location of all active Shugendô temples and other sites (Gakken 1993:184-226).[33]

Figure 1.6 En no Gyôja statue at Mount Ômine's summit, 2003.

En no Gyôja is venerated today as a bodhisattva (人変大菩薩 *Jinben daibosatsu*) at Kinpusenji and elsewhere. Though contemporary lay practitioners may not emulate his pine dew diet or strive for flight or invisibility, they do abstain from meat and alcohol to purify themselves before participating in the Lotus Ascent inspired by his model. On his blog, "En no Gyôja Fan Club" (役行者ファン倶楽部), Tanaka Riten seeks to revive certain elements of the ascetic householder's fierce mountain practices in the context of our "modern civilization without pain." In an essay entitled, "What Did En no Gyôja Teach?" Tanaka writes,

[33] At a cost of 971 Yen (less than USD $10) and available in major bookstores, each volume in Gakken's Books Esoterica series provide a wealth of practical information for history buffs and aspiring lay practitioners.

> Today's society is one in which the phenomenon of the human body seeking to control the spirit, a situation of reversal akin to the guest turning the tables on the host. As a companion to the growth of civilized society, we become surrounded by cars and all varieties of electronic appliances such that all physical hardships are taken care of by consumer convenience products. Without even realizing it, a lifestyle has taken root such that the heart-mind grows accustomed to being kept (as on a leash) by the flesh. By nature, however, it is human beings' spirits that are the masters of the physical body. For this reason it is without a doubt that this false step (wherein the flesh overtakes the spirit) can be seen as a great violation. As an antithesis to civilization letting the body go slack like this, Shugendô embodies En no gyôja's teaching "By means of physical hardship…" to pursue "Physical Training, Physical Power." It therefore might be said Shugendô has an important responsibility right now to shoulder for the next generation (Tanaka 2010).[34]

Tanaka's assessments of contemporary society and reversals of the "natural" relationship between the body and spirit are presented in a distinctive ascetic register intended to cut through the mystifications of late capital. To hear of En no Gyôja's mountain training in the context of modern consumer society brings the seventh century magician become bodhisattva into the discourse of the twenty-first Century. Whereas few progressive or conservative reformers speak of submitting oneself to hardships and pain, including adopting voluntary simplicity in the context of ecological and economic crises, Tanaka does not shy away from what he regards as the urgent need to cultivate an embodied ascetic worldview. Tanaka exhorts embracing physical hardship and approaching the natural world with gratitude, humility and reverence to build physical and mental strength to resist reactive and fear-inducing priorities of mainstream consumer society.

In a similar dynamic of reviving and updating hallmark ritual to inspire participation by contemporary householders, temples like Sannô-In (Nikkô) and Kinpusenji organize events on

[34] See http://homepage3.nifty.com/enno-f/enno3.htm. Accessed 4 February 2013.

weekends to accommodate lay participants' work schedules.[35] There is simply not enough time or resources to conduct elaborate initiations or mountain entry rituals common in the Edo period (1603-1867) when professional, full-time priests were the norm. Simplification and creative foreshortening of hallmark practices is therefore a feature of every contemporary Shugendô tradition, but these innovations within the context of revival are not without precedent. As Sekimori documents with fieldwork and archival research at Nikkô, the Flower Offering Peak (formerly held over 50 days in Edo) has been revived in "doubly condensed form" in early June as the Spring Peak (2 days) and in mid-September as the Autumn Peak (2 days). Edo period Shugenja dedicated more time to traversing the mountains south of Lake Chûsenji and spent extended periods sequestered in various temporary huts (宿 *shuku*) (Sekimori 2009:65).

Similarly, the three-day Sôzenjô rites at Nikko are based upon an Edo period condensation (9 days) of the Medieval Summer Peak (50 days) (2009:66). Debate and dissent within various traditions (and denigration by outside observers) takes place in response to condensing and altering rituals in the present, as it did during the Edo period (2009:65n38). Sekimori reveals how the revival of Nikkô Shugendô by Tendai abbott Tenkai (天海 1536-1643), for example, aroused much controversy about how the mountain entry should be performed and what rituals should be included. This led to a subsequent proclamation in 1650 (*Nyûbu shohatto* 入峰諸法度)that the practice be made compulsory for all Nikkô ordained priests (Sekimori 2009:65n38). As with the present revival of Nikkô begun in 1985, Edo period shugenja also appear to have been uncertain about the exact locations of traditional practice sites and expended great efforts toward rebuilding and restoring them using any available documents.

[35] The Lotus Ascent, which takes place annually on the seventh day of the seventh month, is exceptional. When it falls on a weekday (as it did in 2003) fewer than half the usual number of lay participants (approximately 120) attend.

C. Entering with the head, entering with the body

While critical analyses of nostalgic discourse and commodification have their place in discussions of contemporary Shugendô, this kind of scholarship reveals only one small part of the meanings being worked out in the mountains. It is all too easy to point out the ironies of pilgrims riding in air-conditioned comfort and spending hundreds of thousands of yen to purchase the clothing and gear for ascetic practice.[36] More difficult work involves examining the meanings being worked out by modern Shugendô practitioners as they address complex concerns during ascent.

Figure 1.7 Kuruma-ya Yamabushi Gear Shop, Yoshino, 2003.

[36] If purchased new from the ascetic gear shops in Kyoto or Yoshino, a mid-priced set of clothing, shoes and the basic accoutrements (sutra books, Vajra, animal pelt, conch shell) would set you back just under 100,000 Yen ($1,000 USD). The cost for the conch shell alone, depending on its quality, size and origins, varies between 30,000 to 80,000 Yen ($300-800 USD). Source: Kuruma-ya Yamabushi Gear Shop, Yoshino (Figure 1.7). With the exception of the tabi slippers—think of white Chuck Taylor All Stars with a split toe—which provide unparalleled grip and sensitivity for 3,000 Yen ($30 USD), there is no strict requirement to purchase any or all of the gear and attire. Most first-time participants and many veterans wear moderately priced hiking gear.

Kinpusenji priests distinguish between two kinds of individuals—those who "enter with their bodies" (身体で入る *karada de hairu*) and those who enter "with their heads" (頭で入る *atama de hairu*). Those who enter with their heads purchase snazzy gear and guidebooks but seldom return after one or two events. Ivy's "discourse of the vanishing" whereby the rural Japanese homeland (故郷 *furusato*) is made to seem Other to urban Japanese may help explain the initial attraction to rural historical sites and how such religious tourists understand their experiences (1988). Those who enter with their bodies cannot *not* come back year after year. One must take care to distinguish between these two groups.[37] Very few of the 120 men (women are forbidden from climbing Mount Omine)[38] I joined in the Lotus Ascent in 2002, 2003 and 2007 cared much about the rich, multivalent symbolism of the yamabushi gear or the ritual austerities' "original meanings."[39] Something else more powerful, personal and immediate had brought them. Some were first-timers. Others had come back every year for five, ten, twenty and even thirty-five years.

The first man I befriended is a greens keeper at a golf course in Fukui (Northeast of Kyoto). Another is a regional manager of Kodansha Publishing House in Tokyo. Some patterns in participants' life stories emerged: joblessness and depression, problems conceiving children,

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[37] Long-term, persistent participants who have ascended Mount Ômine ten, twenty, thirty and even forty times are readily identified by the respective colors of the pom-poms attached to the brocaded surplice they wear around their necks. Though such differentiation and acknowledgement is lost on neophytes, once one gains a sense of the gradations indicated by color, the extent of ascetics' experience and know-how is immediately apparent. This differentiation, it should be noted, is in contradiction of the purported radical egalitarianism of the climb whereby participants die to their former selves (and statuses) to be ritually reborn.

[38] Gender prohibition is discussed on pp. 79n73, 193-196.

[39] Numerous studies have analyzed the symbolism of the Shugendô wardrobe and religious equipment (Miyake 2001:80-83; Swanson 1981:66-69; Earhart 1970:26-28). There is no need to repeat it here. Much of the deeper religious significance and ritual use of these items is kept secret, revealed only to the initiated within certain ritual contexts (Tanaka, personal communication, July 2003, Yoshino).

marital difficulties, empty nests and retirees wondering what to do with themselves. I suspect some also had trouble with alcohol or other substances. Though they had tried other treatments and therapies or participated in other religious traditions, according to quite a few practitioners I spoke to, only Shugendô provided satisfying and lasting results.

I realized that some important meanings and therapy were being worked out on the mountain. Individuals were responding in complex ways that went beyond facile fascination with or nostalgia for ancient practices. The therapeutic effects and not concern for institutional history or the meanings of the ritual practices came up in our conversations. These men had been empowered to become the active agents of their healing process. Through opportunities to speak about their experiences in evening meetings or write about them in temple newsletters, they created narratives of discovery, reconciliation and healing.

Religion scholar Yumiyama Tatsuya defines "healing" (癒し *iyashi*) as an "activity of holistic recovery" in diverse fields (religion, medicine and art) oriented towards "harmony with others and nature" (Yumiyama 1995:267). On an individual level Yumiyama identifies a reaction against the "separation of body and spirit in modern society" and a response to "the attenuation of human relationships" (1995:267). The term healing (iyashi) was unknown outside of religious and New Age movements until the collapse of the bubble economy in early 1990s (Yumiyama 1995:272). Healing is now a subject of everyday discourse yet also fits within broader discussions of religious salvation. Yumiyama distinguishes between healing and salvation as follows:

> The tendency in these religious movements has been to avoid the word *healing,* as the term suggests the use of a provisional *hoben* 方便 (expedient means); in most cases the words *sukui* 救い or *kyusai* 救済, both meaning "salvation" are preferred, even when the curing of sickness is involved. Generally speaking, *salvation* suggests, to a greater extent than *healing* does, that the approach involved is an intellectual one based on doctrinal grounds (1995:268).

Healing suggests a limited, one-shot remedy whereas salvation connotes a universal element that connects it with existential suffering shared by all human beings (Yumiyama 1995:269). The Nishi no nozoki may be compared with healing practices, according to Yumiyama, insofar as participants' ritual gaze into the Void addresses "the problem of meaninglessness in a direct and concrete way so that the individual actually *feels* the significance of life" (1994:272).

D. Narrative as epistemology

According to Gregory Harpham, every practitioner of the work of culture, regardless of his/her particular "discipline" is involved in the quintessential resistance or denial of instinct, temptation and libidinal energy the literary theorist calls the "ascetic imperative" (Harpham 1987:vii). Ascetic practice, according to Harpham, enables individuals to make the self "representable" (1987:27). We therefore "owe to asceticism the notion that the exemplary self is observable, and especially that it is narratable" (Harpham 1987:27). This speaks to the view that ascetics require an audience and their dramatic performances hold appeal for audiences and readers. Witness the enormous body of ascetic literature worldwide and the growing market for ascetic media in contemporary Japan.[40] As Yumiyama states about the relationship between healing, salvation and narrative:

> Salvation occurs precisely because one has experienced a healing that picks up the scattered fragments of a life and shapes them again into a single story, filling up the void left by meaninglessness (1994:270).

In Volume Two of *The History of Sexuality, The Use of Pleasure,* Foucault speaks of asceticism among pagan Greeks and Christians as a "self-forming activity." Greek ascetics since the time of Seneca (4 BCE – CE 65), according to Foucault, sought to compose a beautiful life or "art of living" grounded in civic concerns that would be worth remembering, thus narrated for

[40] Contemporary Japanese ascetic media are reviewed on pp. 82-88, 93-100.

future generations (Foucault 1985:27). This idea flourished in pre-Christian times and reappeared in the Renaissance (Harpham 1987:27). It is worth remembering that Greek asceticism was founded on self-mastery and self-possession available only to the few freeborn males and was primarily motivated by aesthetic concerns. In the context of contemporary Shugendô, however, discipline and initiation is now being extended to the general public as a mechanism for transformation and healing. This is not to say there are not important aesthetic conventions for performance of one's taiken, only that the healing aspect is prioritized.

What is it about ascetic self-formation that lends itself toward narrative? What are the mechanisms by which the performance and dissemination of these narratives result in transformation and lasting healing? I next examine the relationship between asceticism and narrative with reference to urban lay Shugendô practitioners and their creation and performance of an experiential narrative (体験 *taiken*). Performance of taiken during evening meetings atop Mount Ômine are analyzed as a ritual of catharsis and healing, on the one hand, while also constituting a form of initiation into a new community and culture theorized by Richard Valantasis as the "social function of asceticism" (1995:546).

The use of experiential narratives (taiken) began at Kinpusenji when Tanaka Riten instituted the "evening meeting" on Mount Ômine's summit during the Lotus Ascent. The Lotus Ascent (26 kilometers, one night/two days) is a condensed bout of mountain austerities based upon those undertaken along the Okugake Trail (170 kilometers, five-nights/six days) popular since the Edo period. The Lotus Ascent was promoted in the 1980s to attract busy, urban lay people in the years leading up to the bursting of the economic bubble (Tanaka, personal communication, July 2002, Yoshino). Tanaka was curious to learn how lay people described the experience of doing shugyô and felt this more informal discussion session would help break

down the boundary between professional and amateur ascetics (Personal communication, July 2007, Yoshino).

Much has been made of the influence of Shugendô upon Japan's New Religious Movements (NRMs). Examining these traditions helps to understand contemporary Shugendô practice because the NRMs feature certain aspects of Shugendô practice in more pronounced or elaborated form. The prominence of charismatic healers fortified by mountain austerities in NRMs such as Tenrikyô and Agonshû are two examples (Miyake 1987:71-81).[41] Comparatively little has been written about the ways Shugendô priests have made use of techniques developed within NRMs to successfully recruit new members (Reader 1991:120-21). This is part of a larger context of NRMs having usurped potential followers that Shugendô schools formerly relied upon. Ian Reader discusses how the leaders of urban-based NRMs have "bridged the mountain/village dichotomy" that made yamabushi so vital in former times by "bringing the practice and acquisition of power into the cities" (Reader 1991:120-121). The effects of urbanization and the rural exodus have eroded the former base of support for Shugendô temples traditionally rooted in remote mountain settings. Through the establishment of branch temples (末寺 *matsuji*) in urban centers throughout Japan, Kinpusenji has sought to stake a claim on potential urban adherents.[42] The use of UNESCO related travel promotion media, NHK and

[41] Tenrikyô (天理教) was founded by Nakayama Miki (1798-1887) after she received a series of revelations. See Shimazono 1986 for a study of Tenrikyô's milenarianism. Agonshû (阿含宗) is a new Buddhist tradition based on a "rediscovery" and reinterpretation of the historical buddha's teachings in the light of Japanese folk religion and Esoteric Buddhism by charismatic founder Kiriyama Seiyu (桐山靖裕雄 formerly Tsutsumi Masuo, 1921 -). See Reader 1988 for a study of Agonshû's success in recruiting urban followers.

[42] Otaru (Hokkaido), Tokyo, and Naha (Okinawa) are three locations of Kinpusenji branch temples I visited during initial fieldwork in 2002.

commercial television documentaries featuring Kinpusenji's priests and lay followers have also helped to generate greater interest in their activities and events.[43]

1. The function of narrative in Shugendô

Priest-guides who lead trials in Shugendô training spaces in the contemporary period give participants a number of short, simple phrases that serve to reinforce the lessons learned during mountain training and facilitate the production of an experiential narrative. One such example is "From mountain practice to home practice" (山の行より里の行へ *Yama no gyô yori sato no gyô e*). A number of participants I spoke with had this phrase as the organizing framework of their experiential narrative. The story of a Shugendô practitioner's catharsis and healing process is frequently crafted into their experiential narrative. Auspicious dreams, a newfound or renewed reverence for nature, and tales of worldly benefits derived from sincere practice frequently appear in these narratives. Practitioners consider their practices "authentic" and efficacious to the extent that they help crack open or dislodge painful memories which had been previously unspeakable, thus un-narratable. The narratives serve an additional function of helping individuals carve out a place for themselves in the tradition, thereby securing their rightful inheritance to Shugendô's cultural and religious heritage. Particularly reverent or sincere participants who articulate the most poignant experiential narrative are often invited to complete an abbreviated (several weekends) initiation into the tradition where they take formal vows and receive Buddhist names (得度 *tokudo*).[44] These recruitment and initiation practices ensure continuity of the tradition and secure for Kinpusenji an active and dedicated membership by lay men and women with busy work schedules and family lives.

[43] Discussed on pp. 89, 96-97.
[44] This was Yamamoto's experience. See pp. 76-79, 102-105 for further discussion.

2. The use of taiken to "open the hearts" of Zenrinkai members

Folklorist Richard Anderson's study of the use of experiential narratives in the NRM Zenrinkai provides a useful comparison. Anderson analyzes three oral narrative genres presented during training sessions. All share the same purpose: to "open people's hearts" so they can better understand and accept Zenrinkai's teachings" (Anderson 1992:319). Taiken are used by various New Religions in Japan to designate narratives of personal experience whose dual focus is 1) an initial recounting of problems before encountering the religious tradition, and 2) the benefits received after internalizing the teachings (Anderson 1992:319). The central feature of taiken is the statement of the realization of the cause of the problem revealed through contemplation of teachings (Anderson 1992:320). Like many New Religions, Zenrinkai rejects karmic causality (縁 *en*) and attributes one's present circumstances to choices made in this life.

Anderson presents a middle-aged woman whose rheumatism has confined her to a wheelchair. She realizes that her stubbornness, impatience and hot temper—all of which contribute to her self-judgment that she is a "bad wife and mother"—is the cause of her illness (Anderson 1992:320). Anderson unfortunately leaves aside any discussions of gender, social control or the conservative nature of the religion's essential teachings and social practices. She concludes that her illness and general malaise will only improve by subordinating her own desires to those of her family. She says during her public performance of taiken—

> The cause of my illness was my own heart…Until then I thought I hadn't made any mistakes, but, after hearing the teachings I felt that everything I heard related to me. I felt that everything was caused by myself. I thought my worst point was that I was stubborn… toward my husband and children I always wanted to have my way…so I was hot tempered (Anderson 1992:313).

Her process of healing hinges upon self-effacement and recognizing her role as caregiver. Anderson argues that defining and accepting one's role is very important in many of the

Japanese New Religions just as Yumiyama suggests finding harmony with others and the environment is central to New Age healing practices. Not finding harmony in relationships is a common source of problems (Anderson 1992:313). The performance of experiential narratives during Zenrinkai training sessions are a more emotional, dramatic and easier to understand method of exposing first-time participants to the teachings than are abstract explanations by spiritual leaders (Anderson 1992:320). Because taiken give direct insights into concrete experiences in an individual's daily life, it is easier for neophytes to imagine themselves and their own circumstances in light of what they hear. Practitioners can then come to their own realization of where their problems lie and how best to apply the teachings. New experiential narratives emerge which regenerate and revitalize the teachings in light of the novel life experiences of emerging religious devotion created by new members.

Simplification for lay practitioners is certainly nothing new.[45] Depth of understanding may come later, but what counts is one's initial resolve and sincerity of effort while participating. In the absence of such resolve or sincerity, being suspended over an 800-foot ravine to confront the inescapable reality of death is highly effective. One need not have grasped the subtleties of

[45] Jôdoshin-shu's *nembutsu* recitation (念仏 a single sincere utterance of "Hail, Amida Buddha") and Nichiren's veneration of the Lotus Sutra and creation of the *daimoku* mandala (with its title inscribed by Nichiren's brush as an object of worship) are two prominent examples. Zen scholar Robert Sharf has made an interesting study of this tradition of simplification for lay audiences in regard to *Sanbôkyôdan,* what some have placed in company with the various so-called "New Religions" of Japan. Sanbôkyôdan (三宝教団 "Three Treasures Association") is a contemporary Zen movement founded by Yasutani Hakuun (1885-1973) in 1954. With a single-minded emphasis on *kenshô* (見性 "seeing one's true nature," Sanbôkyôdan breaks from more traditional models found in Sôtô, Rinzai or Ôbaku training centers. Yasutani Hakuun reduced the complex doctrinal, devotional and ethical teachings of Buddhism to a relatively simple meditation practice involving the repetition of the syllable *mu* (無 "nothing-ness") (Sharf 1995:437-38).

Shugendô philosophy to "get" what is offered in the Nishi no nozoki or other induced religious experiences featured prominently in condensed ascetic trials in the modern period.[46]

3. Learning by doing and imitative repetitive performance

During the Lotus Ascent, guides instruct the group to stop along the route at various small worship sites to offer prayers and flowers to disquieted spirits. Some sites enshrined such historical notables as Minamoto Yoshitsune (源 義経 1159-1189). Often sites have an experiential component to them, such as Yoshitsune's "Kakuredô" (隠れ堂 "hideaway"), a small wooden hut in which first-time participants are locked away in total darkness to perambulate a central pillar while chanting, "The Kakuredô in the depths of the Yoshino mountains, here has always lain the abode of Emptiness." Eventually a great clanging bell was rung inside and the exterior door was thrown open into the morning light. Through the rite one experiences the loneliness Yoshitsune felt after fleeing Minamoto warriors and hiding in the Yoshino mountains. The clanging bell and door quickly thrown open awakens neophytes by shock to the Emptiness of existence (驚愕会誌 *kyôgaku kaishi*) (Blacker 1965:104).

Though each practice site (行場 *gyôba*) is different, the basic idea is to arrive at an experiential understanding of the teachings. Whether that be passage through a narrow cave imagined as the Tantric womb or suspension over a ravine to experience the Void, ascetic trials are directed toward shocking participants into an induced religious experience. Helen Hardacre has written about the Tantric Buddhist symbolism associated with seclusion in caves in Mount Ômine during fieldwork among a mixed gender and ethnicity confraternity from Osaka in the 1980s. She argues that women entering the womb world of the cave assimilate the experience in

[46] Practitioners descriptions of the meanings and benefits derived from the embodied practice of shugyô within Tateishi's eco-pilgrimage are presented in detail in Chapter Three. See especially pp. 124-126; 131; 135-140.

altogether different terms than men. Men emerge from the womb having been "reborn in the sense of being newly endowed with esoteric knowledge and powers" (Hardacre 1984:57). By contrast, women "celebrate a principle already inherent in their own sexual nature" (Hardacre 1984:57). To cite Hardacre further, "Whereas men unite themselves with a principle opposite to their own being (*coincidentia oppositorum*), women worship the power of which they themselves already represent the full flower, already complete in itself. (…) Instead of completing their own being through union with the opposite sexual principle [as men do], women return to the original source of all power, from which in psychological terms they have never been separated" (Hardacre 1984:57).[47]

Once having had this "moment of truth," an elaborate ritual and narrative procedure helps turn this initiatory experience into lasting healing. Descriptions of the breathtaking natural scenery often accompany narration of these moments. Neophytes learn to craft their own experiential narratives by hearing and imitating Shugendô's priest-guides and veterans. An older generation of priests narrate the sites' history, often recounting possession by malevolent forces (御霊 *goryô*) or hungry ghosts (餓鬼 *gaki* S. *pretas*). When approaching small stone markers or wooden shrines in 2002, our head guide Gojô described how creepy (気持ちが悪い *kimochi ga warui*) the place felt to him. It became palpable through his stories.

[47] Ellen Schattschneider presents a good comparative study of cave entry and womb symbolism informed by psychoanalysis (2003:160-62).

Figure 1.8 Passage through the womb, Mount Ômine, 2003.

Several men I met on Mount Ômine hinted that they learned during bouts of shugyô that their infertility (to give one example of what triggers participation) was likely caused by having angered an ancestral deity or other spirit (Personal communication July 2002, Yoshino; June 2003, Tokyo).[48] Hearing stories of possession helps give shape to long-held suspicions about the source of one's problems. Photojournalist Fujita Shôichi vividly describes an episode of possession during the weeklong Okugake. Just as a female ascetic who dropped her water bottle into a ravine said, "What a waste!" The leader cautioned the group against becoming possessed by a hungry ghost angered by the remark. Suddenly, a man in the group drew everyone's attention for the thick, oily sweat and laborious breathing that issued forth from his body. Grabbing the leftover rice from his ration and force-feeding it to the man, the leader induced vomiting to "cure" the man of the possession (Fujita 1995:27). My co-participants listened with

[48] Yamamoto's experiences with infertility is discussed on pp.76-79; 102-105.

various levels of attention and credulity, but for those who took such stories and sentiments seriously, Gojô's provides a language and symbolism to interpret episodes from their own lives and training experiences. By contrast, Tanaka de-emphasizes paranormal experiences and inhabitants of the spirit world, focusing instead on mundane physical or psychological concerns. In his writings, he stresses that he has never personally had any supranormal experiences (Tanaka 2005:155). Tanaka calls himself one of the rare "strange" Shugendô priests (へなちょこ山伏 *henachokko yamabushi*) who does not especially enjoy being in the mountains nor seek out opportunities to ascend. He says he leads ritual ascents several times per year as part of his mandate as a Kinpusenji priest (2005:155). Satisfaction comes from his vocation, not from any inherent pleasure of time spent in the mountains.

Through assimilation of the teachings and language of mountain shugyô by repetitive imitative performance, Shugendô participants come to know themselves better and gain mastery over traumatic experiences. A Tokyo variety show producer's attribution of a causal link between acts of past violence with a traumatic series of miscarriages enabled he and his wife to make sense of what had previously been understood as a genetic fluke or ambiguous diagnosis of stress and "unease." The appearance of Shugendô legendary patriarch En no Gyôja and subsequent delivery of a healthy baby boy provided the narrative link between their problem and a fortuitous gift of grace from the compassionate sage.[49]

[49] Discussed in more detail in Chapter Two.

Figure 1.9 Tanaka Riten chants sutras as sun catches fire, Mount Ômine, 2007.

III. Tateishi Kôshô's stewardship of Kumano's mythic and natural landscape

A. The Way of Nature

Tateishi Kôshô (立石光正 1955-) is a Tokyo native who moved to the Kii Peninsula twenty-five years ago for monastic training at Kinpusenji. Among his life experiences are an aborted career in insurance sales with the Japanese postal service, two-year stay in a Greenwich Village squat while studying dance at NYU, and five years bouncing around the globe as a self-described "hippie." A gifted ocarina (ceramic flute) and conch shell player, he has recorded several albums with djembe (African drum) accompaniment. Young women, university students and Westerners comprise the most rapidly growing demographic at his Wakayama training site, but middle school and middle aged participants are not uncommon. My first encounter with Tateishi was in July 2003 when I saw him perform with an African drumming troupe at Shingon Buddhist

temple Sakuramoto-bo (桜本坊) in Yoshino, the site of a festival for world peace aligned with the Mayan ritual calendar. The festival, attended by an all-ages crowd, featured amplified music in one of the dharma halls, calligraphy practice and Zen meditation. After two energizing sets with the djembe troupe, Tateishi performed a saitô goma fire ritual in the courtyard. Tateishi's jam session partners (figure 1.10) form part of a thriving community of Japanese Rastafarians in Yoshino. Anthropologist Marvin Sterling's compelling portrait of the "Yoshino Dreads" illustrates how global cultural flows interact with and complement pre-existing cultural communities and practices throughout Kumano's rich history (Sterling 2010:175-6). Having recently returned to their hometown after a decade or more of world travel, this ten-member Roots and Rasta outfit has strong connections to the local business and arts community. A pair of cousins own a thriving traditional inn and guesthouse; other Dreads' members are well-regarded potters (Sterling 2010:176). Collectively they organize Kinpusenji's annual "Frog Hop" preceding the Lotus Ascent and activities at their Jamaica-style "Rasta yard," a performance space and multi-generational, multi-family home in Yoshino (Sterling 2010:176). I have observed collaboration and mutual influence between Tateishi and his Sangakurin guests and members of the Yoshino Dreads' Rasta Yard.

Figure 1.10 Tateishi Kôshô grooves with the Yoshino Dreads, Yoshino, 2003.

Through these activities and inspired by his eclectic community Tateishi has been working to create his own sect called "Shizendô" (自然道 *The Way of Nature)* which blends aspects of Shugendô practice with yoga, ecology, art, rice agriculture and music. His life's work and spiritual practices arise from critique of Japanese cultural chauvinism, floundering national education system and exploitation of the natural environment. Each of his projects flow from an ascetic vocation understood as protecting Kumano's nature in collaboration with diverse members of his community.

Figure 1.11 Tateishi Kôshô leading monthly conch shell lesson in Tokyo, 2003.

B. Just another eccentric?

Though the Japanese government and construction industry have effectively shut this modern ascetic out of civil engineering projects for which charismatic predecessors Gyôgi (行基 668-749) and Kûkai (空海 774–835) were revered, Tateishi has found his calling in the remediation of damaged and polluted sites.[50] Tateishi and his neighbors' successful projects have included removing rusting hulks of junked cars and buses from the bed of a sacred waterfall and relocating a fifty thousand tatami mat mountain.[51] Each success garnered attention from local and national media outlets and enabled him to reclaim and revive damaged training sites. Like his ascetic predecessors, Tateishi tends rice crops and offers prayers for blessings received and to guard against bad weather and pests. Authenticity and meaning should not be assumed to lie

[50] Historian Janet Goodwin has characterized the work of these outstanding religious activists as "building bridges and saving souls" (1989). Goodwin has written a related book about alms collection by itinerant evangelists (1994).

[51] Discussed with reference to Tateishi's eco-pilgrimage on pp. 143-144.

solely in the past for Tateishi and members of his eclectic community, however. Often they are busy creating new meanings to suit present and future needs of increasingly global networks. Tateishi's concert with the Yoshino Dreads and fire ritual at Sakuramoto-bo, a temple registered on Japan's prestigious National Treasure list for its ancient esoteric statuary, is emblematic of the multiple, overlapping fields Tateishi fluidly moves within. Tateishi has imbibed from a store of charisma with clear precedent in Japanese religious history and continued resonance today.

Were it not for his charismatic predecessors and affiliations with recognized lineages and sites, Tateishi would be just another eccentric. An interesting and talented eccentric, yes; but would such a colorful, counter-cultural figure be taken seriously and invited to participate in formal ritual occasions at major temples unless he activated recognizable sources of power with precedence and continued relevance in modern Japanese society? Would Tateishi have succeeded in mobilizing the local populace and local public office to remediate the damaged and polluted sites in the Wakayama countryside with no tradition of mountain ascetics performing public works?

The combined elements of his ascetic training, personality, talents and experiences have prepared Tateishi to fulfill this charismatic role among a global community of well-connected practitioners. But why now, why here? My hypothesis is that Tateishi and his followers constitute, in one instance, a kind of new social movement of disaffected youth, middle-aged and elderly people who come together because of shared life experiences arising partly from the long-term economic downturn and social upheaval commonly known as the "Lost Decade(s)" (1990s to the present).[52] Having worked hard, done what was asked of them, and still unable to

[52] This refers to the period immediately following the tanking of the economy and systematic breakdown of postwar social structures and safety net from the late 1980s forward. Signposts toward an emergent civil society in the wake of Japan's "Lost Decade(s)" are found in

find meaningful, stable work or establish a household and family, these individuals are pessimistic about their future viability as "strong individuals" (強い個人 *tsuyoi kojin*) willing to take risks (リスク *risuku*) in post-bubble Japan (Miyazaki 2010:239). Quite a few find resonance with Tateishi's critiques of Japanese labor practices, education system and the construction state. His simple, disciplined life, musical and culinary virtuosity positions Tateishi as an attractive mentor and conversation partner.

Tateishi's quiet example of self-sufficiency through organic rice agriculture, vegetable production and participation in small-scale, inter-dependent local social economies illuminates sustainable pathways toward the kind of future many of his devotees, neighbors and students wish to see. He never lectures about these matters, instead he welcomes participants into his training space and exhorts them to observe their surroundings and the way they feel while they are there. Rather than simply converse with individuals to diagnose what ails them, Tateishi sends them out into the forest or, in my case, to scrub the temple's toilet, to seek the answers. Tateishi likens his task to opening a series of drawers (引き出しを引く *hikidashi o hiku*) for urban lay practitioners to peer into and see whether they find something of interest. He places a premium on knowledge gained from experience and contemplation of the natural and built environment. In doing so, Tateishi's example and methods might be regarded as sowing seeds of hope for a community of dropouts, seekers, down-shifters and backsliders who may have otherwise tilled barren fields in an eroded civil society.

Tateishi frequently receives late-night phone calls from distraught individuals contemplating suicide. Rather than take their lives, Tateishi urges them to travel to Sangakurin to

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Jeff Kingston's *Japan's Quiet Transformation* (2004:306-12). The socio-economic and existential triggers for participation in Shugendô during the Lost Decade(s) are discussed on pp. 104-108.

do shugyô and participate in the activities there to gain some perspective. I observed Tateishi take a half dozen such calls over six weeks in the summer of 2007. A young man from Nara with ambiguous yakuza (mafia) connections arrived late one evening in a typhoon concerned about debts he owed to a loan shark. Tateishi gave generously of his time to speak with the young man but was firm in his insistence that he would have to take responsibility for his poor decisions. Throughout their lengthy conversation in the kitchen, Tateishi, the young man, and several other guests drank beer and saké while we worked together to chop and slice various ingredients to prepare a hearty stew of fried tofu and udon noodles. It was in this context that I first grasped the ways Tateishi's culinary and musical virtuosity animated his creation of a space for his guests to work out their own solutions to problems.

Interestingly, this troubled young visitor never ventured beyond the temple grounds to do shugyô or participate in morning or evening devotional services. Most mornings he slept in late and missed breakfast. Tateishi offered no judgment or approbation. Instead, he allowed the young man and his soft-spoken male companion to simply hang out at the temple, drink beer throughout the day and play the didgeridoo while Tateishi played his flute. In fairness, a fierce typhoon beat at the doors and windows making it difficult to go out without being drenched. This man seemed to have been looking for an attentive companion, practical advice about managing his debt and a hang out space more akin to the "regional living rooms" analyzed by anthropologist Anne Allison during fieldwork among "ordinary refugees" in contemporary Japan (2012:365).[53] Though he clearly respected and admired Tateishi, this young man seemed indifferent to Tateishi's status as a Shugendô priest and appeared to lack any curiosity about the tradition and its teachings. This young man was serious about music and savored moments when Tateishi played his ocarina flute and offered bits of wisdom gained from years of doing shugyô

[53] "Regional living rooms" are compared with Tateishi's site on pp. 133-134.

and contemplating nature. One observation Tateishi shared with the young man during a very late evening of drinking and playing music together stands out:

> Rivers are blue, frogs are green, trees too are green. But don't let yourself be fooled. Trees, so that we may see them, appear "tree" colored. But even if they appear "tree" colored, the reality is different. Each of these is actually the same color, the color that is no color. There's nothing. They're empty. These colors are teaching us awareness. Only this. So we must never forget: in our world, colors appear to make us aware of our being (Tateishi, personal communication, July 2007, Shingu).

How exactly this young man facing unpleasant debt repayment made sense of Tateishi's enigmatic statement of emptiness (無 *mu* S. *Śūnyatā*) was not clear.[54] Tateishi couches such reflections upon fundamental teachings in simple and direct descriptions of local flora and fauna. Sangakurin participants have direct, daily encounters with these natural phenomena and can use such opportunities for reflection upon more subtle teachings. Whether such teachings have relevance for dealing with loan sharks is left to the individual's discretion. Tateishi's advice to take full, personal responsibility for questionable decisions, no matter the extenuating circumstances, is instructive should subtler teachings prove opaque.

C. Sliding toward rebirth

Can we say these diverse urban practitioners participating in activities at Sangakurin, Sakuramoto-bo and at Tokyo parks with Tateishi are "doing Shugendô"? Are these training procedures outside of traditional initiation and teaching practices not something more akin to wilderness education and counseling? It must be admitted that very few lay participants in mountain shugyô practices and other ritual activities at Sangakurin have much in depth knowledge about or engage explicitly with traditional Shugendô teachings. Tateishi does not

[54] The concept of emptiness is encapsulated in the Heart Sutra (般若心経 S. *Prajñāpāramitā Hṛdaya sutra*), the most commonly chanted sutra in Shugendô and Japanese Buddhist schools. Donald Lopez has written the most comprehensive study of the notion of emptiness elaborated in the Heart Sutra (1996).

stress them overmuch. Further, those seeking philosophical explanations are encouraged to return to the mountains for more shugyô. Tateishi privileges direct, physical experiences of insights from core teachings. This differs little from traditional approaches of viewing the body and its sensory faculties (once purified) as the vehicle for transcendence within Shugendô.

What one repents (and/or reveals, has revealed) during the practice of repentance while chanting "Sange, sange" (懺悔懺悔) during mountain training is not just individual transgressions committed in the past, but the weight of collective human suffering. One's sorrows stem from a stubborn refusal to accept the inevitability of change (無常 *mujô* "impermanence" S. *Anitya*). When one grasps this fundamental truth of impermanence, s/he may be inspired to cease clinging to mundane passions, particularly those "rooted" in the sense faculties or rokkon (六根): sight, hearing, taste, touch, smell and consciousness and strive for greater sensory acuity. Enlightenment thus becomes possible. The practice of Rokkon shôjô (六根清浄) calls for one to "purify" or "distance" one's self from transgressions, slippages and worldly passions arising from illusory sensory data. These illusions obstruct the path to enlightenment. Zange is the meditative practice of reviewing attachments to delve deeper into the realization of impermanence.[55]

While chanting "Sange, Sange, Rokkon shôjô" and participating in the Nishi no Nozoki rite of repentance and rebirth during the Lotus Ascent, lay practitioners are presented with condensed versions of a medieval practice similar to newly devised practices Tateishi offers urban guests at Sangakurin. The practice of "Sliding to rebirth" down a seven-meter waterfall imagined as the mother's womb offers vivid illustration of Tateishi's creative reinvention of

[55] Religion scholar Lucia Dolce presents an illuminating investigation of meaning and practice of repentance in Japanese religious history (2010).

hallmark Shugendô practices.[56] This fun and exhilarating plunge is inspired by rites of penance and purification (捨て身 *sutemi*, "throwing away the body") undertaken by Mongaku in the twelfth century. Blind itinerant balladeers（琵琶法師 *biwa hôshi*) regaled medieval audiences with the tale of Mongaku's nearly fatal penance and salvation by Fudô-myô-ô at Nachi Falls. Mongaku's ritual penance in Nachi Falls is also commonly represented in Edo period woodblock prints (nineteenth century).[57] Mongaku was a warrior also known as Endô Moritô (1139-1203) who took the Buddhist tonsure to atone for mistakenly killing his cousin during the Genpei Wars. His ritual penance chronicled in the epic poem *Tale of the Heike* (平家物語 *Heike monogatari,* redacted twelfth century) evokes medieval associations of Nachi Shrine with Kannon's island paradise (普陀落 *Fudaraku*).[58] In the sixteenth century Jesuit missionaries witnessed Buddhist priests setting sail from the Kii Peninsula's southern coast (near Nachi Shrine) to Kannon's island paradise in acts of religious suicide (普陀落渡海 *Fudaraku tokai*) (Mihashi 1982; Gorai 1994:161).[59] These acts were rare and extreme, performed only by elite practitioners, but the sheer number of representations of this tragic tableau (particularly in visual media) indicates their central place in the medieval and early modern imaginary.

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[56] Tateishi calls this the "waterfall slide" (滝の滑り台 *taki no suberidai)*.

[57] The British Museum contains a woodblock triptych by Utagawa Kuniyoshi (歌川国義) depicting Mongaku performing his ritual penance in Nachi's frigid waters. Fudô-myô-ô's revives him with his compassionate flames. Search image by "Mongaku" and its dates of production ("1851-2") here: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database.aspx. Search "Mongaku" for variant depictions in other media. Accessed 3 January 2012.

[58] Royal Tyler has completed the most recent of many English translations of *The Tale of the Heike* (2012).

[59] For further historical evidence recorded in chronicles, diaries, and letters, see Moerman 2001:92-117. Visual representations of the boats bound for Fudaraku can be seen in the *Nachi Pilgrimage Mandala* (那智参詣曼荼羅 *Nachi sankei mandara*) held in Shôkakuji's collection in Wakayama (大阪市立博物館 1987: plate 4 reproduced in Moerman 2001:113) and a seventeenth century engraving based on Jesuit accounts in *Atlas Japannensis* (Montanus 1670 reproduced in Moerman 2001:100).

Tateishi's "Sliding to rebirth" is done in summer under far less treacherous circumstances, but the rite retains important aspects of Mongaku's wintry ritual of purification and transcendence. First, Tateishi's practice involves ritual ablution in a waterfall of substantial height and depth in Kumano's majestic natural and sacred landscape. Though not intended as religious suicide, the threat of injury and death is present as participants undertake this ritual shedding of their earthly body to be reborn in the purifying waters. The force of water falling from such heights can dislodge neck vertebrae or cause novices to lose their balance and be swept away and drown in the rocky current. These risks are magnified during typhoon season. Tateishi, Abela, a Shingu ramen shop owner and I set out to do the waterfall course immediately following prolonged, heavy rains in July 2007. We abandoned plans of sliding toward our rebirth as the volume and force of the waterfall made it too dangerous. Two weeks later, under normal weather conditions and water levels, a frightening and risky endeavour was transformed into a rejuvenating afternoon.

At this particular waterfall, there is a second cascade fifty meters downstream one could be swept down if unable to escape the current. Remnants of rusted, jagged metal from junked cars are occasionally found just beneath the pool's surface: a more likely source of potential danger for those sliding toward rebirth in the post-industrial age. To avoid injury and ensure a positive experience for all, Tateishi carries a diving mask and flippers to help him clear any debris and assist less confident swimmers.

Tateishi explained his intentions with the waterfall slide in Sangakurin's kitchen several days prior to our scheduled trip. With emotion in his voice, he let his mind roam freely to bundle together disparate thoughts and feelings.

> At Keyaki ga hara there is a trail with 47 waterfalls revered since the earliest days. One of them is formed perfectly into a seven-meter slide and ringed by magnificent, towering Zelkova trees. Most people just relax and think it's a fun place to slide down

> a waterfall. But there's actually more to it. (…) I say to middle-aged people who have figured life out, "Next comes the slide." As they prepare for the plunge, I tell them, "Don't panic." You have to remember that these folks are caught up by social conventions, in fact they're exhausted by them. Letting go and just plunging down the waterfall is a rare opportunity. There are no such waterfalls in Tokyo. (…) In the world of Shugendô, this is the practice of transcending the body [sutemi] immersed in the world of the Womb Realm Mandala. We re-enter the mother's womb through this experience. As we slide into the pool, we can sense that we are reborn. Surrounded by the beautiful nature of Kumano, we are reborn with the birth cry. *This feeling is exactly what I want people to experience* (personal communication, July 2007, Shingu).

Tateishi's update of the medieval rite of sutemi takes place within a sacralized landscape understood as the Womb World Mandala. *Maṇḍala* (曼荼羅 *mandara*) is an Indian Sanskrit term referring to ritual diagrams that serve as guides or maps for practitioners passing through various graduated stages of meditation or realms of being who commune or identify with various divinities.[60] A mandala might be represented in two or three dimensions, often as paintings, monumental architecture or sand sculptures.

In the ninth century Japanese monk Kûkai (774-835) returned from Tang China with two painted scrolls of the Dual Realm Mandala (両界曼荼羅 *ryôkai mandala*) contained in a cache of texts, artworks, and ritual implements given as gifts by his Chinese master and teacher.[61] These were intended for use in the establishment of Tantric Buddhism in Japan. Kûkai later ritually superimposed the Diamond and Womb Mandala onto the landscape of the mountain

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[60] Historian Heather Blair's definition and literature review ("Maṇḍala") in the Oxford Bibliographies database (www.oxfordbibliographies.com) is an excellent starting point for an understanding of mandala and their ritual uses. From the "Buddhism" section search "mandala." Accessed 4 January 2012. Art historian Elizabeth ten Grotenhuis' text *Japanese Mandalas: Representations of Sacred Geography* contains further background for their ritual use in Japan and the development of indigenous forms (1999). Her text contains color images of the Dual Realm Mandala in high resolution (ten Grotenhuis 1999 plates 6 & 8). Heian period (859-880) originals are housed at Saiin, Kyôôgokuji (Tôji) in Kyoto.

[61] The Dual Realm Mandala consists of the Diamond Realm Mandala (金剛界曼荼羅 *kongokai mandara S. Vajradhatu maṇḍala)* and Womb Realm Mandala (胎蔵界曼荼羅 *taizôkai mandara* S. *Garbhakosa dhatu maṇḍala*).

monastic compound he established on Mount Kôya and the entirety of the Kii Peninsula. In ritual texts prepared for this consecration on the third day of the fifth month of 819, Kûkai uttered the following:

> …[I]n order to repay the kindness of the buddhas by spreading the Tantric teaching, and to augment below the resplendence of the five kinds of deities by liberating sentient beings, in sole reliance upon the secret teaching of the Vajrayâna, I wish to establish both the great mandalas of the Womb and Diamond realms.
>
> To the east, west, south, and north, and in the four intermediate directions, as well as above and below, within a circumference of seven ri: all maleficent spirits and deities within this area, each and every one, get out of my sacred ground.[62] All beneficent deities and spirits in the area, those who can bestow advantage, may reside as you please (*Kôbô Daishi Zenshû* Vol. III (1996): 530 cited in Gardiner 2000:18).

Kûkai's sacralization of space established Kumano as a "hot spot" and provided Shugendo practitioners with a highly organized sacred landscape with this new overlay of Tantric Buddhist symbolism of death and rebirth (Gardiner 2000:18). New understandings of sacred space and mountain austerities did not supplant pre-existing notions but supplemented and combined with them. Following Kûkai's ritual consecration, symbolic death and rebirth during ascetic ascent could be understood in both Tantric Buddhist terms or the pre-existing Japanese kami venerating tradition in which mountains were understood to be the Other World (常世 *tokoyo*) where the dead were properly buried and from which new souls emerged. This superimposition resulted in a multivalent symbolism and flexible space for individual ascetics to work out their own path and understanding of what the rites could accomplish for them.

The tenth century *Ômine engi* (大峯縁起 "Origins of Ômine's Shrines and Temples") and twelfth century *Shozan engi* (諸山縁起 "Origins of Various Mountains") elaborates upon Kûkai's mandalic superimposition by connecting various peaks used for mountain training with

[62] One ri equals 2.44 miles (Kûkai and Hakeda 1972:46).

buddhas, divinities, and local manifestations of cosmic buddhas (権現 *gongen*) and accompanying sutra, ritual implements and relics (Miyake 2001:112).[63] Though one can and should question its validity as historical description, excavations at Nachi have unearthed objects dating to the early Nara to late Heian period that apparently correspond to items listed in the *Shozan engi* (Moerman 2005:79).

Alan Grapard characterizes this "mandalization of space" evidenced in both quasi-historical documents as an unprecedented attempt to equate mountain entry with the ritual visualization practices of entering a two-dimensional mandala painting (1982:210-211). In this new conceptualization of the Kii Peninsula's landscape, mountain ascetics journeyed from peak to peak, venerating buddhas and bodhisattvas residing within the mandalic mountain according to instructions contained within ritual manuals for use with the Diamond and Womb Mandalas. Meditation, rituals and offerings were performed in accordance with procedures adapted from Tantric procedures from Tang China. The *Shozan engi* states that,

> The peaks are the residence of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas…and the sacred places on the mountains are the dwelling sites of the divinities and of the Immortals. (…) Alongside the peaks of the Buddha, they tread Emptiness (…) Bathing in the salt of creeks, valleys, beaches and ponds allows one to wash away the suffering of this triple world. Such is the Ocean of virtues and powers required to push one away from bad deeds in this very life. There, one practices purification with constant seriousness. (…) Those who tread those spaces and cross these rivers must think that each drop of water, each tree of these mountains is a drug of immortality, even if they suffer from a heavy past of misdeeds (Miyata 1976:91,100, 108 cited in Grapard 1982:211).

[63] Annotated classical Japanese source text of the *Shozan engi* is available in Miyata 1976:91-108. Alan Grapard has translated selected passages into English (1982:210-11). The more comprehensive *Shozan engi*, purportedly compiled in 1180, brought together the biography of En no Gyôja, the oral tradition of Ômine ascetics and the *engi* from Mount Ômine, Mount Katsuragi and Mount Kumano. See Miyake's monograph on the *Ômine engi* for further details and analysis (1988).

Practitioners are depicted here as communing or identifying with various buddhas and bodhisattvas while treading certain peaks, entering particular caves and bathing in Kumano's purifying and restorative waters. This passage prefigures Tateishi's Slide to Rebirth as well as glossy Japan Travel Bureau brochures and posters for the Kumano area found in most urban rail stations ("Come visit Kumano's World Heritage! Soak with the buddhas and divinities in hot springs!")

When I slid toward rebirth with a group of ten fellow participants in 2007, Tateishi explained nothing about the historical background, doctrinal or symbolic meanings or even what we should think or feel. No explicit mention was made of either the mandala or any corresponding divinities or buddhas. He had discussed it with me prior to departure in Sangakurin's kitchen after I inquired about his intentions and the historical background, but not with any other participants from what I could gather. Nevertheless, this exhilarating plunge into an aquamarine pool ringed by Zelkova trees[64] was a highlight for many guests. In contrast to formal mountain entry practices at Kinpusenji where break periods are mercilessly short, after the waterfall slide members of our group swam in the bed of the waterfall or lounged in the sun on a nearby beach. I asked Okada and Takahashi Mayumi, a forty-year old Waldorf schoolteacher from Kanagawa, whether they felt they had been reborn. Had the ritual worked? Both smiled and gave me thumbs up. This pleasant memory from shugyô would be more likely immortalized on a Facebook photo wall than carved in an Edo woodblock, but there is ample precedence for flexible navigation and interpretation of such rites of purification, transcendence and rebirth in Kumano.

[64] 欅 *keyaki.* Latin: *Zelkova serrata*.

When Okada described her experience of the waterfall slide later that evening during dinner, she used the expression "returning to neutral" (ニュートラルに戻る　*nyu-toraru ni modoru*). Derived from an English loanword ("neutral") and informed by a pop-psychology sensibility, Okada's usage of this expression to describe her experience appears to be a radical departure from medieval balladeers' depictions of Mongaku's near fatal rite of atonement

Figure 1.12 Tateishi contemplates Bikuni Falls, Wakayama, 2007.

and quasi-historical chronicles equating Kumano's natural phenomena with divinities and buddhas within a mandalized landscape. Regardless of the vocabulary or framework (penance,

purification, Emptiness, rebirth, returning to neutral), the embodied experience of sliding down this waterfall in the twenty-first century is said to cleanse and refresh the body and heart-mind (心 *kokoro*). Participants reported having continued the course with greater awareness of and appreciation for the landscape's rugged beauty and their place in it. Several also mentioned occasions when they have visualized this cathartic splash to manage stress and anxiety at home or work. Their efforts to do so embody the contemporary Shugendô maxim, "From mountain practice to home practice."

In Tateishi's informal setting at Sangakurin, certain liberties may be taken with doctrine and praxis yet the core of the experience persists. So long as participants experience first-hand the *feeling* of re-entry into the mother's womb for rebirth, there seems no urgent need to explain doctrine or history. Similarly, the support of a belief system, protection of kami and buddhas and the possibility as lay people to learn and perform rituals and come into direct contact with deities are cited as common motivations for participation in recently revived Nikkô and Koshikidake Shugendô traditions (Sekimori 2009:62). Sekimori's research participants said they did the practices because it "feels good" and understood what they were doing as "purification in nature" (2009:63).

As I understand him, Tateishi privileges a transformation in consciousness and recognition of embodied existence over and above doctrinal understanding as a means to empower individuals to participate more fully as active agents in their lives. For some participants at Sangakurin this sense of empowerment means not only engaging with a revived and dynamic mountain ascetic tradition but also taking part in growing citizens' movements that promote broad and inclusive participation.[65] Tateishi often speaks of empowerment as part of

[65] Discussed on pp. 141-156.

his mandate. A pamphlet he distributed to a group of Kyoto University students in 2003 featured the word "empower" prominently. Tateishi wrote "enpower" by combining the Japanese word for karma (縁 *en*) with the English loanword "power" written in the katakana script, thus 縁ポワー (*enpowa-*). This neologism has the double and bilingual meaning of "karmic power" and "empower."

In Shugendô and the Japanese Tantric schools generally, there is a further supranatural valence to the ritual procedure of "empowerment" (加持 *kaji*) related to the practice of identification (加 *ka*) with deities to realize (持 *ji*) certain purposes. Miyake defines kaji as "magico-religious rituals wherein the shugenja achieves identification with the deity and manipulates the power thus obtained in order to gain certain benefits" (2001:68). Tateishi is not the first contemporary Shugendô priest to favor bilingual neologisms like "enpowa-" over traditional terms for ritual practices like kaji. In an interesting feature of modern Japanese linguistic practices and social attitudes toward traditional religions, English loanwords (enpowa-, healing, etc.) have become familiar while words for traditional ritual practices like kaji sound exotic to most Japanese. Japanese children and Western practitioners with limited Japanese language ability or cultural literacy (two key demographics for contemporary Shugendô) can readily understand these playful, simplified expressions and practices.[66]

IV. Conclusions

Carmen Blacker's shock at the "devastating change" she observed at Mount Ontake in 1967, a mere four years after a previous field visit to an apparently pristine mountain precinct, is

[66] Children's participation in the Three Day Monk Camp is discussed on pp. 91-92. Profiles of Western practitioners are presented on pp. 123-126 and 109-112

understandable (1975:296). Conclusions drawn from what she observed at Mount Ontake and Mount Fuji, another sacred mountain developed for mass tourism, sound plausible:

> Very soon, I was confidently told, there would be a téléférique 'ropeway' to the top of the mountain. No one would then have to climb at all, and the craters would be filled with teahouses, from which cheerful amplified music would banish loneliness. Eventually the trances would disappear and Ontake would join the company of those other erstwhile holy mountains where only the odd name or the odd inscribed stone survives to remind the lay climber that in the past the ground beneath his feet are considered so holy that only the duly purified might tread there (Blacker 1975:297).

But such dire predictions about the imminent and permanent loss of integrity, authenticity and meaning at Mount Ontake and other Shugendô mountain training sites have proven premature. As shown above, a creative and dynamic process of revival undertaken by charismatic, media-savvy priests in Yoshino, Nikkô and Kumano has reinvigorated traditional training sites, practices and communities despite modern development and environmental degradation of ascetic training sites.

In an age where part-time ascetics participate in overnight mountain ascent rituals and travel along paved stretches of their training grounds in air-conditioned comfort, a focus upon the length, number of rituals performed and accommodations made for lay practitioners seems beside the point. What takes place before and after these ritual occasions is also worthy of study. As anthropologist Ann Grodzins-Gold observes of her Rajasthani research participants, they are "much else before they are pilgrims and for much more of their time" (1988:1). Part-time ascetics continuously interpret their daily lives in light of these infrequent yet meaningful visits to the mountain.[67] Opportunities exist for urban lay practitioners to reconnect with Tateishi and peers during monthly conch shell lessons in Tokyo, but individuals are just as free to pursue their practice independently on their own terms. Some gather weekends at miniature shugyô circuits

[67] Integration of lessons learned during mountain training back home in the city is discussed on pp. 94, 103-104, 108-109 and 112-120.

in Tokyo's suburbs such as Mount Mitake (御岳山 elevation 929 meters).[68] Others convene in urban parks to enjoy nature, meditate and practice their conch shells. Practice by part-time, occasional urban ascetics is the new reality in contemporary Shugendô.

I conclude by offering two additional perspectives on the use of modern transport within the space of traditional ascetic training rituals. Paul Swanson describes participants in rites conducted by Shogo-In in July 1977 being whisked from Kumano shrine to the foot of the Yoshino mountains by bus, taxi and express train. It was explained to him by a priest-guide that it was "pointless to cover this distance on foot as there are no places of worship between Kyoto and the foot of the Yoshino mountains" (1981:63). With the transformation of the landscape, what had been a forest trail connecting two distant sites of worship had become suburban sprawl by the late 1970s. With this same justification, a half-hour chartered bus trip back to Kinpusenji concludes the second day of the Lotus Ascent. What would be the point of completing the journey over paved streets in a residential neighborhood when the mood and character of the trail is completely transformed?

Ian Reader's study of bus pilgrimage to the 88 Shingon Buddhist temples on Kûkai's native island of Shikoku (四国遍路 *Shikoku henro*) features comments from local temple priests who regard package bus tour participants to be "closer to the heart of the pilgrimage" (Reader 2005:189). An anonymous priest complained that foot pilgrims rarely worshiped at his temple. Instead, they had their souvenir books stamped, took a quick look around and then moved on (Reader 2005:188). According to the priest, individuals who do the pilgrimage in what appears to

[68] Mount Mitake is written with the same ideograms as Mount Ontake (御岳山), but the first character 御 is pronounced "Mi" in this context. Mount Mitake is located in the Chichibu Tama Kai National Park (秩父多摩甲斐国立公園) a popular leisure space encompassing more than 1250 square kilometers of forested mountains, hills, gorges and Shintô shrines in the prefectures of Yamanashi, Saitama, Nagano and Tokyo.

be the most "traditional" or "authentic" manner are in fact "just walking," rather than engaging in a faith-centered endeavor that he felt the pilgrimage should be. Temples were simply points of reference on a long walk rather than as spaces for expressions of devotion and prayer. According to priests, bus pilgrims, by contrast, actually engage in extended prayers, acts of devotion and interaction with priests and staff at the sites (Reader 2005:188).

Foot pilgrims are said to do the pilgrimage independently and expend most of their energy walking from temple to temple. Bus pilgrims expend little to no energy traveling between sites and travel in the company of trained guides who stimulate participation in and provide ample free time for prayers and devotional acts. Depending on what aspects of the journey are emphasized—contemplation of landscapes between sites during foot travel or sustained acts of devotion and prayer at temples afforded by the comfort and speed of a bus tour—Reader's fieldwork suggests multiple ways for pilgrims to experience the Shikoku circuit in the present age (Reader 2005:188-9). My fieldwork at Kinpusenji and Sangakurin since 2002 confirms similar flexibility, pragmatism and diversity of engagement by contemporary Shugendô priests and lay participants.

CHAPTER TWO

FROM THE CITY TO THE MOUNTAIN AND BACK AGAIN

I. Introduction

A man on a high tech mountain bike greets me at the street exit of Ebisu Station in Tokyo on a warm evening in early June 2003. Business suits, high school uniforms and cute accessories are everywhere. In his backpack he carries a conch shell trumpet (法螺貝 *horagai*). Yamamoto is thirty-eight, a father of two young boys, a native of Nagano prefecture and a producer of "idiotic" television variety shows (馬鹿馬鹿しい *bakabakashii*). Even he shakes his head at their enduring popularity. The conch shell, he tells me over beers at a nearby Nagano home-style restaurant, accompanies him everywhere. I joke that it is a *keitai horagai*.[69] He smiles and shrugs, "I guess most folks carry cell phones."

Neither a Luddite nor overly nostalgic for his hardscrabble rural hometown in Nagano prefecture, Yamamoto also uses a cellular phone and is a thoroughly modern and media-connected, urban cultural worker. He does not necessarily share with colleagues and friends that he spends free time doing Shugendô mountain training and devotional practices. But neither do co-workers and friends necessarily tell him how they spend their free time in the metropolis of 12.9 million residents. Whenever he gets a break during an on-location shoot, Yamamoto bikes toward the nearest park to purify the realm and contact Zaô Gongen (蔵王権現) through sound vibrations.[70]

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[69] 携帯法螺貝 portable conch shell. The adjective *keitai* ("portable") typically describes cellular phones (携帯電話 *keitai denwa*). A conch trumpet inaugurates ritual time, purifies the realm, alerts wild animals humans are entering the area and helps one communicate over long distances to fellow ascetics walking in mountains.

[70] This amalgamated deity (権現 *gongen* "avatar") is a local manifestation of the cosmic buddha *Dainichi nyôrai* (大日如来 S. *Mahavairocana*, "Great Sun Buddha") venerated by

His instrument is a thirty-year old Micronesian conch shell fitted with a steel mouthpiece by priest Tateishi Kôshô.[71] Yamamoto first picked up the conch six years before during his first ascent of Mount Ômine. The sound of the conch, associated with esoteric Buddhism in Asia and religions worldwide, is said to mimic a lion's roar. Imagine how neighbors in his apartment building react upon hearing its otherworldly resonance. In blowing it, one identifies with the ferocious animal and cosmic avatar Zaô Gongen, transmits the dharma and purifies the realm. Yamamoto's conch skills are impressive. So good, in fact, that he led the conch brigade in the Lotus Ascent in 2002. He explains that it is just something he does, as natural and necessary as breathing and offering gratitude to Shugendô's patron deities.

Having met Yamamoto in 2002 in a largely silent ritual climb, I was curious to learn what life circumstances propelled him up the mountain. I also wondered how he understood and integrated his experiences in daily life in one of Tokyo's densest and hippest centers of pleasure, cultural production and consumption. I wanted to understand why a successful, energetic urban professional with a wife and kids would pursue mountain shugyô at a distant, rural training site.

Over bowls of hearty soba noodles Yamamoto shared stories of his childhood and adolescence, including an early obsession with legendary story collections（説話 *setsuwa* "oral tales") like the *Nihon ryôiki* (c. 822). When other kids in rural Nagano were reading popular comics, he devoured modern translations of classic tales filled with supernatural beings and powerful ascetics. After high school, Yamamoto moved to Saitama prefecture (north of Tokyo)

Shugendô practitioners. Practitioners seek union and alignment with Dainichi nyôrai to harness his formidable powers. For studies of various aspects of Zaô Gongen's mythic career, see Suzuki 2009 and Blair 2011.

[71] Tateishi informed me that the age of a conch is determined by counting the stripes on the shell just as one would a tree's rings. Tateishi also told me that conch are endangered species but that Japan is permitted to import them from Micronesia, Taiwan and other countries under two circumstances: scientific research and religious use (Personal communication, July 2007, Shingu).

to begin an assortment of insecure, poorly paid, part-time jobs. Yamamoto indicated that his life during this period lacked any particular excitement or passion whatsoever. He experienced it as a string of monotonous days with no clear pattern or direction.

As he described this period of his life, Yamamoto underscored a certain malaise that had affected him and a group of acquaintances and co-workers. Although Japan's economic growth was in high swing, confidence in having defeated Wall Street and securing a place at the table of economic superpowers did not readily translate into a clear path for future satiety and happiness for Yamamoto and his under-educated and under-employed peers. This was during the late 1980s just prior to the tanking of Japan's bubble economy and beginning of the "Lost Decade(s)," a period of prolonged recession and market reforms discussed further below.[72]

Yamamoto had become involved with a motorcycle gang (暴走族 *bôzôzoku*) at this time, a decision he said he now regrets. There were occasional battles with rival gangs; the details, he says, are not important. His actions during one evening raid in the late 1980s, however, are. Yamamoto told me how he bashed a rival's face with a steel pipe he had taken to carrying around with him (not unlike his conch during the summer of 2003). As he described this eruption of violence in his life, Yamamoto lingered over the detail of the steel pipe.[73]

"What use is there in carrying around such a thing?" he asked. He seemed to weigh the heft of his weapon in his hand as he recalled how it slid undetected between his motorcycle's seat and tailpipe. When Yamamoto realized how vicious the damage he inflicted on his victim's face and upper body was, he swore to end his connection with the gang. Awash with blood and

[72] The Lost Decade(s) are also discussed in Chapter Three in connection with urban participants at Tateishi's Forest of Mountain Learning. See pp. 131-133.

[73] Yamamoto is not the only Shugendô practitioner I have met who has experienced or perpetrated violence. Former soldiers, abusive husbands and individuals convicted of manslaughter from drunken or impaired driving have sought time in the mountains to reflect upon and repent for past traumas.

his own head pounding, he thought to himself, "There's no future in a world where a guy's gotta haul around a steel pipe" (Personal communication, June 2003, Tokyo).

By this point in our conversation we had switched to saké and Yamamoto described how he met his wife and their early days of marriage. Both had come to the city from the provinces. They decided to have kids, grow up a bit and become respectable people. While continuing his irregular employment Yamamoto attended a trade school at night for media production, thereby securing employable skills, a broader professional network and a more direct path toward more stable employment and higher wages, albeit in the volatile entertainment industry of Tokyo. The problem was that he and his spouse were unable to bring a child to term. His wife had a series of miscarriages. Several doctors suggested various techniques; none worked. They experienced great suffering and doubt in themselves and each other. Were they suitably matched as a couple? Their relationship held together "miraculously," according to Yamamoto, but they soon settled into a distasteful and unexpected reality that they would likely not have children.[74] Yamamoto started to blame himself, wondering, "Were we being punished for my night with the steel pipe?"

I return to Yamamoto's story below but present this brief background sketch to introduce several of the chapter's key questions and concerns. I define contemporary Shugendô as a mountain ascetic vehicle for self-cultivation and healing that privileges an embodied experience of core teachings. I focus upon the myriad ways male participants in the Lotus Ascent integrate lessons learned from mountain training in their daily lives. Only men may ascend to Mount Ômine's summit. A policy of gender prohibition (女人結界 *Nyônin kekkai* or 女人 禁制 *Nyônin kinsei*) is enforced on the grounds of maintaining ritual purity, among other justifications beyond

[74] Nakatani Ayami and Romi Dasgupta present perceptive analyses of the transformations in attitudes toward sexuality, marriage, fatherhood and normative masculinity during the Lost Decade(s) (Nakatani 2006; Dasgupta 2009; Dasgupta 2013:101-32).

the scope of this chapter. [75] Four portraits of men from Tokyo, Osaka and San Diego who have participated in Kinpusenji's condensed ascent of Mount Ômine and/or Tateishi's Slide to Rebirth are presented.[76] The experiences of individuals from diverse socio-economic, ethnic and cultural backgrounds at different stages in their life course show how participation in condensed mountain training practices satisfies particular needs at particular moments.

What does it mean to do ascetic training (修行 *shugyô*) in an age of abundance? The ideograph for shugyô can be glossed as "cultivation" (修) through "training" and/or "hardship" （行). With resonance in the agrarian context of preparing rice fields for sowing seed (耕す *tagayasu*), literally digging into or plowing the earth to plant rice or other seedlings, shugyô may be seen as critical preparatory work required for any productive task. When I asked participants at Kinpusenji and Sangakurin about how they understood shugyô, quite a few of them mentioned this related concept of tagayasu. But it is worth noting that shugyô is neither the exclusive purview of peasants and rural piety nor are motivations and benefits of doing shugyô in contemporary Japan strictly bound within the discrete frame of religious asceticism. In fact,

[75] Gender prohibition at Mount Ômine became the subject of controversy among Kinpusenji leadership and rank and file membership shortly before UNESCO World Heritage designation (2004). I present published statements in Kinpusenji's temple newsletter published in 2002 in Chapter Four (pp.193-196). Excellent sources on gender prohibition in Japanese religions are as follows: (Sekimori 2006; Miyazaki 2005; Faure 2003:219-49; Ambros 2008:45-52). Ambros' measured analysis of archival evidence related to gender prohibition at Mount Ôyama suggests Western feminist and modernist critiques may not capture the full story. During the early modern period married male mountain ascetics (and not their wives) were the target of celibate Kogi Shingon Buddhist clerics' prohibition on women. The ban effectively displaced ascetics to the village below Ôyama's peaks thereby curbing access to rival sacred specialists. Another clever strategy restricted both women and men from ascending Ôyama's peak except during a brief summer festival season. Priests, innkeepers and guides realized such a restriction intensified pilgrims' desires and resulted in far greater numbers and more abundant alms than if the peak were accessible throughout the year (2008:45-52).

[76] To counter-balance this chapters's exclusive focus upon male perspectives, four portraits of female Shugendô practitioners are presented in Chapter Three. See pp. 123-126, 131-140.

shugyô can be undertaken with objectives and benefits as diverse as those who perform such preparatory training.

Individuals' particular motivations for and gains from shugyô resist neat categorization and overarching analytical frameworks. Successful businessmen may find Shugendô practices attractive because the required physical and mental discipline maps onto corporate *ganbaru* (頑張る "work your ass off") culture. Performing shugyô in beautiful natural areas can also provoke reflection upon the negative impacts of exploiting natural resources for financial gain, thereby prompting certain business leaders to invest in technologies to clean up the industrial process. For men approaching retirement, participation in Shugendô enables them to experience first-hand historical and cultural traditions they may have lacked time to pursue during their careers. What's more, recent retirees make new friends who help relieve anxiety about how to spend newfound free time and interact with spouses and adult children from whom they may have grown apart. For younger men, concerns about employment, marriage, fertility, child and elder care, physical and mental health may trigger participation. But each motivation is not limited to any particular life stage, socio-economic or cultural background. Younger participants report curiosity about cultural traditions just as retirees come with concerns about their adult children.

In this chapter I situate contemporary Shugendô participants' experiences and hoped-for outcomes within a broader context of rising interest in Tantric Buddhism and "New Age" spirituality and healing (the so-called "Mikkyô" and "New Age" booms). Such interests arose in response to oil shocks and concerns about industrial chemicals (1970s), realizations about the human and ecological impacts of unprecedented economic prosperity (1980s) and subsequent re-evaluation of values following the collapse of Japan's speculative economy (1990s) (Yumiyama 1995:279). I survey a representative sample of ascetic promotional media to show how media

savvy priests and their affiliates work to adapt and demystify hallmark teachings for the general public. In one stream of these popular cultural materials, contemporary Shugendô emerges as an attractive alternative to and set of coping strategies for dealing with precarious life circumstances aboard the treadmill of post-bubble, zero-growth Japan. But more broadly speaking, contemporary ascetic media promote opportunities for lay people to cultivate disciplined living and attain contentment on their own terms irrespective of the particular life circumstances that may have triggered participation. As Gojô Junkyô, a former Kinpusenji head abbott and early popularizer writes, "The path is wide and lacks a fixed gate" (1983:90).

To be clear, I do not wish to imply all or even a majority of contemporary urban Shugendô practitioners are social dropouts, downshifters or "labor renunciates" (*freeters* or NEET).[77] Indeed, a number of the practitioners I have met during the Lotus Ascent are gainfully employed in permanent positions in top corporations or own their own successful enterprises. Individuals with greater discretionary income and leisure time should not be dismissed as casual tourists. They report how doing shugyô enables them to explore questions about the manner in which they have attained their success and conducted their personal and family lives. Time spent in the mountains has helped them realize how to transform destructive and unsustainable habits and embark upon a new way forward. Contemporary lay practitioners also say that doing Shugendô helps them attain intrinsic this-worldly satiety, life-work balance and a quality of life distinct from the extrinsic post-retirement rewards promised to those who sacrificed their best energies to the corporate workplace during Japan's so-called "economic miracle."

[77] ''NEET'' (Not in Education, Employment or Training) and ''Freeters'' (Free, part-time workers) refuse participation in corporate, white-collar employment and reject the ideology of sacrifice and deferred gratification characteristic of Japan's high growth "ganbaru" period (Driscoll 2007:172). These individuals are discussed on pp. 104-108.

II. Contemporary popular ascetic media

The majority of participants at Kinpusenji (Yoshino) and Sangakurin (Shingu) are occasional lay participants from primarily urban communities. Certain of these individuals found themselves without full-time, secure work or no work at all after the bubble economy burst. Individuals reported that their overall quality of life, relationships and sense of self had suffered in the wake of being "restructured," "outsourced," demoted or forcibly retired. Other participants have come to Shugendô out of a pervading sense that their lives could and should be better. They report seeking greater life-work balance, stimulation and opportunities to contribute to something greater than productivity for productivity's sake in the world's second largest economy. For still other individuals, it may have been simple curiosity or desire for contact with something or someone they saw on television or read in a book, magazine or on the Internet.

Individuals from diverse walks of life I met during fieldwork reported that after one or another life crisis they began investing any available time, energy and discretionary income in the pursuit of something that might provide concrete guidance and opportunities for more meaningful and satisfying participation in social, cultural and economic life. By doing Shugendô these various individuals realized they could participate in the culturally recognized activity of walking in a sacralized mountain landscape while attending to existential and practical concerns. Further, occasional participation in condensed mountain training practices opened up possibilities for direct encounters with the transcendent, opportunities as lay people to perform rituals and membership in a dynamic group of men and women facing similar challenges.

An examination of a representative sample of the growing body of popular writings, television broadcasts, Internet sites and social media provides a glimpse into the rich and multivalent world contemporary lay practitioners are being welcomed into. I focus primarily upon the writings and other promotional media employed by Tanaka Riten and his colleagues,

staff, students and lay participants at Kinpusenji. He is by far the most prolific and tireless promoter of contemporary Shugendô. Tateishi Kôshô is something of a media darling in his own right but does not write or publish and has only plugged into the Internet at his independent training site in 2011. I present media created by others who document and support Tateishi's activities as these serve promotional and recruitment purposes.

Three defining characteristics of this continuously evolving body of multi-media materials on Shugendô can be identified:

> 1) Multi-media saturation campaign generates curiosity about and interest in visiting and participating in Kinpusenji and Sangakurin ritual calendar events, including mountain training practices for lay participants, folk performing arts events, fire rituals, seasonal festivals and lay ordination procedures.
>
> 2) The target audiences span generations (four year olds to the elderly) and divisions of class, race, gender, fitness and interest levels.
>
> 3) Successful promotion and recruitment comes from the creative reinvention of hallmark practices and accessible teachings that are perceived as being highly attractive, powerful and relevant for the contemporary age.

A. New Age and Mikkyô booms

This burgeoning interest in Shugendô among urban lay practitioners must be situated against the broader spike in interest in Japanese Esoteric Buddhism (the so-called "Mikkyô boom") and "New Age" spirituality and "healing" practices. The Mikkyô boom was apparently sparked by a critically acclaimed 1979 NHK television program featuring Sakai Yûsai, one of the "1,000 Day Ascetics" (千日回峰行者 *sennichi kaihôgyôja*) affiliated with Tendai Buddhist temple Enryakuji on Mount Hiei (比叡山 north of Kyoto) (Wazaki 1979a; Rhodes 1987:185). The NHK producer Wazaki Nobuya also published a book about his experiences documenting the fierce Enryakuji kaihôgyô practitioners (Wazaki 1979b). According to Yumiyama Tatsuya, inter-related interests

in mountain asceticism, Mikkyô and New Age spirituality were stimulated in part by three events:

> 1) **The 1973 oil shocks**. Confidence in perpetual economic growth was shaken, making Japanese citizens aware that a lifestyle unhinged from mass production and consumerism was possible. Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1963) was translated into Japanese, inspiring interest in organic farming and community supported agriculture in urban districts (提携 *teikei*) (Akitsu and Aminaka 2010:510-12).[78]
>
> 2) **Unintended consequences of 1980s economic prosperity.** Suggestions to decrease work hours and increase opportunities for leisure time in nature were provoked by prominent cases of "death by overwork" (過労死 *karôsh*i).[79] Translation into Japanese of Shirley MacLaine's memoir *Out on a Limb* (1983) provided further inspiration for flowering of New Age movements.
>
> 3) **Bursting of the speculative bubble economy in the early 1990s**. Certain individuals are said to have developed a taste for spiritual rather than material goods and begun pursuing "inner rather than outer wealth" (Yumiyama 1995:279).

I discuss each in turn with reference to key actors, moments and movements that have contributed to the rise of interest in mountain asceticism, mikkyô and New Age healing in the contemporary period.

1. Hiei's 1,000 day ascetics

The so-called "Marathon Monks" from Mount Hiei (kaihôgyôja) are famous for undergoing severe mountain training practices over a period of seven years, including daily training in steep mountainous terrain for the equivalent of 30 kilometers for 1,000 days (sennichi kaihôgyô).[80]

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[78] Akitsu Motoki, professor in the Philosophy of Agricultural Sciences at Kyoto University, gave a colloquium presentation at Concordia on 16 January 2013 on the "pro-sumer movement" (teikei, "direct relationships between producers and consumers") in Nerima ward, Tokyo, from 1973 to the present.

[79] The 1987 "Resort Law" and co-optation of public funds by corrupt corporations and bureaucrats to build extravagant spas and hotels in national park land fed the speculative bubble economy (McCormack 2001:87-88; Knight 2010:2). This complex subject is discussed further in Chapter Four.

[80] The practice is said to have been formulated by Sôô Kasho 相応 (831-918), a Tendai monk who secluded himself for many years to do shugyô on Mount Hiei (Rhodes 1987:186). Its current form took shape in Muromachi period (1392-1573). Einami Sogen, a powerful post-war

Several of the men who have successfully completed these gruelling practices, including Hagami Shocho (葉上照澄 1903-1989), Mitsunaga Kakudo (光永覚道 1954-) and Sakai Yusai (酒井雄哉 1926-) have written best-selling books (Hagami 1986, 1997; Sakai and Ko 2003). They have also appeared in documentary films created by Western directors (Moreau 1999; Hayes 1993) and television talk shows espousing popular teachings based upon their training experiences in such a demanding tradition (Covell 2004:248). Hagami Shocho has said of the comparison with long-distance athletic training, "If it were only about walking, the postman would be far greater. Our job is worshipping as we walk" (Hagami 1999:60 cited in Covell 2004:257n8). Failed careers, poor health, war, divorce and spousal suicide have been recounted by Tendai kaihôgyô practitioners in popular writings as having triggered their practices (Stevens 1988:104-5, 107, 120-21).

2. "Secret" Shingon meditation techniques as "corrective to psychological ills"

Additional noteworthy moments in this movement toward greater mass interest and participation in Mikkyô was the controversial publication first in Japanese (Yamasaki 1974, 1981) and later in English (Yamasaki, Morimoto, and Kidd 1988) of texts by Shingon Buddhist abbott and scholar Yamasaki Taikô (山崎泰廣 1929-). Yamasaki's publications purported to reveal many "secret" teachings, ritual techniques and personal experiences of mystical union with Shingon deities. Yamasaki justified his actions by stating that "practical instructions in the well-tried meditation techniques might prove a useful corrective to the psychological ills of the age" (Yamasaki cited in Blacker 1988:x). As Anne-Marie Bouchy and other scholars have asserted, there has always been a productive tension in the Japanese Tantric schools and Shugendô between what is hidden and what is occasionally displayed in large public events. Bouchy characterizes this tension as

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Tendai reformer and a successful practitioner of the kaihôgyô, apparently shaped the practice as it is undertaken today (Covell 2004:259n9).

"secrecy supported by the spectacular" and situates it within "antinomian" tendencies in Shugendô (Bouchy 2009:30-39). Nevertheless, the appearance in print for all to read of Yamasaki's ritual practices and mystical insights provoked outrage among some Shingon caretakers and signaled to the public that his works contained something new, exciting, potentially dangerous and possibly worth finding out about (Blacker 1988:xii). Skeptics may argue that the controversy was part of a successful marketing and promotion campaign that spurred further sales and interest in Yamasaki's books and what are said to be secret Shingon practices. Nevertheless, the popularity of Yamasaki's publications (which have gone through several printings now) indicates he struck a nerve during a period of socio-economic, psychological and ecological crisis.

Yamasaki describes an experience performing the "Morning Star Meditation" together with an orthodox Shingon Buddhist explanation of the practice *nyuga ga'nyu* ("exchanging self for other") as follows.[81]

> I rose at two o'clock every morning, bathed, and then performed the ceremony to Venus and the ritual of drawing *aka* water, after which I entered the practice hall for two meditation periods totaling ten hours. During the practice I was isolated from the everyday world. The temple was surrounded by the trees of a primeval forest, and stars in a clear sky were visible to me on awaking in the morning before sleep at night.
>
> At the beginning I had pain in my legs and back, making it difficult to concentrate on meditation. Gradually, however, my body and mind came into harmony, creating within me a feeling of lightness and tranquility. During meditation, my body came to feel almost transparent, while my mind and what I saw around me were clear, like crystal. Far from being a hallucination, this came from increased clarity of consciousness—as I had come to a place where heaven and earth join.
>
> Coming out of meditation and leaving the practice hall, the sense of the vastness of the universe would remain, as though I were seeing the world for the first time. The trees were no longer separate from myself, but seemed a part of me, as though we were a single being. Although my emotions were involved, this

[81] Harasawa Kenta refers to this practice of mutual empowerment and inter-penetration as a form of intangible religious patrimony that must be recognized alongside Nikko's tangible architecture designated as UNESCO World Heritage (2002:4).

> was not an experience of ordinary, sentimental intimacy, but rather an experience of consciousness, a *realization* that one is made of the very same substance as everything else and that nothing in nature is unrelated to the self.
>
> At night, after finishing the day's sitting, I would go up to the mountaintop and meditate in the open, feeling the stars in the late autumn sky surrounding me on all sides, as though I were hanging in space. This sense of unity with all things remained in my mind, even after the practice ended and I returned to the world. A profound feeling of gratitude and a new appreciation for life came to affect everything I did (Yamasaki 1988:189-90).

First-person narratives of realizations gained from Shingon teachings were unavailable to the public prior to Yamasaki's publications. To read in such detail about the procedure and benefits of the Morning Star Ritual in an accessible text opened up new doors of perception and possibility for the general public.

3. Appropriation of mikkyô ritual practices in holistic healing

Clinical programs designed to help individuals suffering from afflictions of modern living have increasingly appropriated mountain ascetic training practices and other ritual procedures (including guided meditation by use of some simplified version of the mandala) from the Japanese Esoteric Buddhist schools and Shugendô. Hodaka Health Park, a kind of holistic health center in Nagano Prefecture was founded in 1986 by acupuncturist Fukuda Shunsaku, who practiced yoga in India and Shugendô at Mount Ômine (Yumiyama 1995:278). Patients' natural healing capacity is enhanced by yoga, hot-spring therapy, hiking in the Japanese Alps and a diet based upon brown rice and fresh produce. At Akame Health Center (Mie Prefecture), founded in 1985 by Fukuoka Takaya, a researcher in diabetes and Chinese herbal medicine, guests participate in farming, raising livestock, art, pottery and mountain walks (Yumiyama 1995:278). These activities closely resemble those on offer at Tateishi's training site in Kumano.

B. Tanaka Riten's conventional and social media campaign

Tanaka Riten（田中利典) was born in Kyoto in 1955. At the age of sixteen, he went to Kinpusenji for ordination and three years of monastic training. Tanaka subsequently attended a sectarian high school on Mount Hiei affiliated with Enryakuji and earned a degree in Buddhist literature from Ryukoku University (Kyoto) in 1979. After further training at Mount Hiei, Tanaka returned to Kinpusenji in 1981 to become a full-time priest. He began inviting members of the general public to participate in condensed rituals shortly thereafter. Tanaka describes his rationale and methods as follows:

> Giving large numbers of people a wide variety of things to reflect upon, experience, and feel is a meaningful part of a religious tradition's mission. It would be a shame if we didn't accomplish this. Since I came to Kinpusenji and began using things like the *Daihôrin* journal and our homepage to send a direct call out to the general public, it's a fact that participation by the public at large has increased (Personal communication, July 2007, Yoshino). [82]

His multimedia promotional campaign has included publishing articles and placing advertising in accessible Buddhist journals and magazines, launching a temple homepage, personal blog called "En no Gyôja's Fan Club" (役行者ファン倶楽部 *En no gyôja fuan kurabu*) and Twitter account. Under Tanaka's initiative, events such as the overnight Lotus Ascent, Three Day Monk Camp and abbreviated ordination procedures were all extended to lay people. The ascetic intellectual and savvy promoter also began a prolific writing career that has produced a dozen titles, including books (Tanaka 2005[1992]; Tanaka and Masaki 2004; Tanaka 2005), collaboratively produced works of art photography and commentary (Muda and Tanaka 2012),

[82] 大法輪 ("Great Dharma Wheel"), a popular journal on Buddhist subjects.

documentary films (Kinpusenji and TV Nara 2010) and a woodblock printed children's book (Kinpusenji and Matsuda 2012).[83]

When writing for the general public in his books, blogs, Tweets and public lectures, Tanaka brings together history, teachings, ritual exegesis, self-help and vivid experience-near testimonials (taiken) from lay practitioners. They are characterized by accessible, vivid and self-deprecating language that demystifies an exotic and little-known esoteric tradition. A consummate raconteur who draws large crowds at public speaking events, Tanaka delivers a rare combination of laugh-out loud humor with poignancy and erudition. He leavens polemic and uncompromising description of the physical hardship of mountain training with light-hearted observations on being a father, friend and priest responsible for the care and well-being of monks and lay participants.

1. Tensions between novice and veteran participants

Throughout the thesis I emphasize the experiences of urban ascetic novices from Tokyo and Osaka because these lay people form a demographic core audience and their experiences have not yet been sufficiently examined in Japanese or Western scholarship.[84] Focus upon this particular cohort may strike some readers and more seasoned Shugendô practitioners as a curious if not controversial choice. Indeed, the presence of inexperienced urban ascetics provokes consternation among veterans during the annual Lotus Ascent. An anecdote from fieldwork will enliven this point. A middle-aged artisan from Tottori named Noguchi warned novices not to thoughtlessly waste limited bath water before veterans had a chance to wash (Personal communication, July 2007, Yoshino). Tradition dictates that first-time participants, who are

[83] For a list of select publications by Tanaka and other Kinpusenji priests and affiliates, visit the publications section of Kinpusenji's homepage: http://www.kinpusen.or.jp/book/book_index.htm. Accessed 4 February 2013.

[84] See pp. 13-14 ("Research context") in the Introduction for a discussion of what kinds of subjects have been the focus of scholars of Shugendô to date.

generally slower and in greater discomfort after the climb, go first. Noguchi witnessed several first-time participants splashing buckets of precious hot water over their bodies as one might at a hot springs resort. By all appearances a compassionate individual, Noguchi's voice registered uncommon emotional strain when he issued this warning at the Lotus Ascent orientation.

Another seasoned ascetic, a son of a shamanistic healer with a Ph.D. in metals engineering in his late thirties who served as our guide in 2007, complained bitterly that two novice participants from Osaka had poor "mountain etiquette" (山の態度 *yama no taidô*) (Iwagishi Shinsei, personal communication, July 2007, Osaka). By this he meant their decision to ascend lightly without a change of dry clothes meant they left their futons at the mountain lodge soiled and damp for future participants. Such behavior departed from the mindfulness and sense of gratitude Iwagishi sought to inculcate.

Such conflicts and misunderstandings between neophyte and veteran ascetics seem inevitable given the gulf in their levels of experience, physical and mental fitness, knowledge of the teachings and ability to smoothly navigate important ritual and social protocol. Tensions of this nature also reveal insights about the changing dynamics and awkward growing pains of a formerly proscribed tradition being actively reformulated and repurposed by its caretakers and participants before many watchful eyes. Gaynor Sekimori's archival research at Nikkô attesting to Edo period debates about condensing and altering rituals during a revival led by Tendai reformer Tenkai (天海 1536-1643) is worth recalling here (2009:65n38). Such tensions and disagreements about how to conduct mountain entry rituals are not without precedent.

Broader changes within contemporary Japanese society as a whole can also be observed in such expressions of frustrations and disagreements between veterans, temple staff and first-time participants. Whereas in the past priests might have expected from newcomers a minimum

capacity to properly negotiate ritual settings where deference to elders and sustained forbearance is required (e.g., not taking the remaining hot water while elders wait patiently), today such expectations are not consistently met by urban lay participants with little or no experience of the formalities of temple life. Though I cannot confirm this empirically with reference to practitioners' social intelligence accrued during formal education and upbringing, I suspect these differing capacities to negotiate subtle linguistic and corporeal etiquette falls along socio-economic lines. No doubt there are other salient variables such as place of birth, educational level, the quality of interaction with and feelings for one's elders (traditional repositories and exemplars of such *savoir-faire*) and the extent to which individuals and their familiars have enthusiasm for Japan's cultural heritage *vis-à-vis* globalization.

2. "Please don't try this at home"

Tonai-In head priest Gojô Ryôki has indicated that much more than decorum and respect for elders is at stake in this delicate process of growth and revitalization. During the 2007 "Three Day Monk Camp" (三日坊主 *mikka bôzu*) for children and parents hosted by Kinpusenji and Tonai-In, Gojô gave the following safety precaution before igniting the ritual goma's flames:

> Under no circumstances should you attempt to light such a fire in your apartment or home. Fire is a sacred element strictly reserved for ritual occasions and conducted exclusively by priests with sufficient training, knowledge and only after having taken safety precautions. If you are interested in lighting fires, you are invited to come to my temple and train as a Shugendô priest (Personal communication, July 2007, Yoshino).[85]

Though I initially regarded this warning as comic relief during the ritual's formal austerity, Gojô informed a group of parents and counselors over dinner that he had begun giving this disclaimer

[85] The expression "Three Day Monk" carries a negative connotation of one who lacks discipline and commitment. Gojô and Tanaka here humorously reclaim and rehabilitate the expression for use in their introductory shugyô for children. The idea is that after this first three day encounter, participants may pursue further engagement.

following a series of tragic Osaka apartment fires set by unattended children (Personal communication, July 2007, Yoshino).[86] Though some may consider them hyperbolic, Gojô's stern remarks from the goma throne are an index of the level of anxiety about "problem children" (問題児 *mondaiji*) in contemporary Japan.[87] Gojô delivered these remarks with characteristic humor to calm nervous parents and children witnessing the ritual for the first time. Gojô's commentary on the modern family delivered as a safety precaution generated lively discussion among parents and camp counselors who stayed up after lights out to chat with the priest about the day's activities.

Gojô's role as host of the Three Day Monk Camp for urban families and Tanaka's use of the Internet and social media to recruit newcomers from urban communities to participate in the Lotus Ascent demonstrates that more than token gestures are being made by broad-minded Shugendô priests to adapt their ritual calendar and social welfare mission to changing socio-historical circumstances. The ways things may (or may not) have been done in the past do not solely determine present and future activities and decisions. Precedent is invoked, but flexibility and departure from hallmark activities seems permitted and in some cases even embraced. At the

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[86] For a discussion of latchkey children and attendant social problems in urban nuclear families, see "The Lonely Child" in Florian Coulmas's monograph *Population Decline and Ageing in Japan—The Social Consequences* (2007:37-50). Kore'eda Hirokazu's 2004 fiction film *Nobody Knows* (誰も知れない *Dare mo shiranai*) dramatizes the case of four young children of different fathers and no formal schooling abandoned by their mother in a Tokyo apartment block. "Based on a true story," Kore'eda presents the danger the children quickly find themselves in when twelve-year-old Akira exhausts the money his mother left him while caring for his younger siblings without electricity, water, cooking gas or adult supervision (Kore'eda 2004). See http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0408664 to view the trailer and further details.

[87] Miller and Toivonen discuss societal attitudes toward "problem youth" and two educational intervention strategies implemented by the Totsuka Yacht School ("discipline") and K2 International School ("accommodation") (Miller and Toivonen 2010). For a comprehensive overview of the problem of school refusers (不登校 *futôkô*) and "acute social withdrawal" (引き籠り *hiki komori*) and rehabilitation efforts in residential schools, see Purratofômu Projekuto 2003. The experiences of a fifteen-year-old school refuser who did eight months of mountain training guided by Tateishi are discussed on p. 141.

same time each priest is keenly aware that efforts to ensure broad accessibility to diverse urban practitioners potentially alienates more seasoned ascetics. As Tanaka has said,

> We have a sense that we've attained some measure of success. But the reality is also that with the increase in participation by everyday people, we've seen a decline in participation by more seasoned ascetic practitioners. This is a difficult problem. But a religious tradition survives only on the strength of broad participation. Since this is our premise, we think our attempts to secure broader engagement have not been unsuccessful (Personal communication, July 2007, Yoshino).

Tanaka has wagered that casting the net as far and wide as possible is the best means of staying financially solvent and relevant for lay participants, a majority of whom live quite far from Mount Ômine. It is neither a simple nor straightforward decision, but one that Tanaka appears comfortable with for the foreseeable future.

Without reaching out to and inviting the general public to participate, Tanaka estimated that mountain entry rituals such as the Lotus Ascent and Okugake would be carried out by approximately thirty members of core staff, monks in training and ordained householders (Personal communication, July 2007, Yoshino). In the 2002, 2003 and 2007 Lotus Ascent participation rates varied between 100 and 120 participants. These larger participation rates are especially gratifying to Tanaka and Gojô given that Shugendô was proscribed by the Meiji government and worship of its syncretistic divinities (gongen) made illegal by government decree in 1868.[88]

3. Has Shugendô "gone viral"?

Tanaka also promotes lay participation in the more demanding Okugake training course (170 kilometers, five nights/six days) popular since the Edo period. In *Fascinating Shugendô*, Tanaka presents five voices associated with the "Okugake disorder" (奥駆け病 *Okugake-byô*) that has

[88] Proscription and the ambivalence of Meiji are discussed on pp. 166-168.

stricken Osaka residents (2005:53). Letters received by Tanaka address some of the pragmatic, socio-economic and existential conditions that have propelled the authors up the mountain as well as how they integrate the Okugake experience in daily life.

> (…) sleeping all crammed together in one room, tremendous snoring; stinking bodies, aching feet. The Okugake is only hardship. I think, "I should just stop coming." But…umm…here I am wanting to come back again (Tanaka 2005:53).
>
> A bit after beginning to walk I get a blister. But simply because it hurts I cannot start to favor or compensate for it. Otherwise my knees and tendons will then also start to hurt. So instead I decide not to cover it up and instead taste the pain. Soon enough it will change into pleasure (Tanaka 2005:53).
>
> Midway through I was ordered to return down the mountain as it looked like I would be unable to complete my shugyô. Having faced the initial shock and disappointment, I re-doubled my efforts and was therefore truly elated when we reached Hongu Shrine, our final destination. When I returned home I discovered that my company had gone out of business. Unfazed by this news, I felt only joy at having completed my shugyô—the sense of refreshment and rejuvenation I experienced was simply overwhelming (Tanaka 2005:53-54).
>
> So that I could participate in the Okugake every year I quit my former company job. At my new work it was settled that I take ten days off at this time of year and I don't let my co-workers know. Since I became smitten by the Okugake, when I accelerated in my car, I stop and think, "If I have an accident here, I won't get to go to the Okugake." Without thinking, I step on the break and decelerate. When drinking, I also think of the Okugake and decide not to drink too heavily—"I should stop about here." The Okugake is my life (命 *inochi*) (Tanaka 2005:54).
>
> During my first time participating, as I was leaving to go home the head priest-guide [Tanaka] whispered in my ear, "Come back next year." Since then I've been afflicted with the Okugake disorder. Living in the city, I've come down with the air conditioning disorder, the stranger disorder, stress disorder (…) all the way up to the, "I need more money disorder." All of these are spreading like contagion. But my Okugake disorder cures all these other afflictions in one shot. And it's even now spreading among my Okugake buddies (Tanaka 2005:54).

From these testimonies, we gain insights into some ways that the inter-relationship between the mountain and city are understood by Tanaka and his students and staff. Tanaka assures us that this urban "gang" of Okugake disorder afflicted souls is not dangerous. In fact, they are attracting the respect and admiration of the community around them (2005:54). You, too, could

be one of them, is the subtext. Tanaka's text is clearly intended as a recruiting tool and guidebook for novice participants from the general public. The language is simple, evocative, and strikes a balance between serious and humorous topics. Benefits to performing shugyô are presented in experience-near testimonials and interspersed with clear explanations of key practices and teachings. High-resolution black and white photographs by Fujita Shôichi (藤田庄市 1947-), a well-regarded photojournalist and frequent Lotus Ascent and Okugake participant, accompany the text. Just by entering the mountain, Tanaka claims, participants' Six Roots of Perception (rokkon) are purified. In one especially evocative passage, Tanaka likens the method of removing impurities from the body during mountain shugyô to the procedure by which a wet dog shakes off water droplets from its fur coat (Tanaka 2005:60). Impurities such as stress, cravings, anxiety, frustration and anger, like water droplets on a dog's fur, are shaken off by doing shugyô. In today's idiom, writes Tanaka, the traditional practice of purification (清める *kiyomeru*) might be likened to healing (癒す *iyasu*) (2005:60). Tanaka makes it clear, however, that participants must leave the "squalid and sordid noise of the city" (猥雑な喧噪 *waizatsu na kensô*) behind and perform repentance and purification of one's Six Roots of Perception in a sacralized mountain landscape (2005:60). Conch lessons and meditation in the city are encouraged, but no substitute for training at Mount Ômine.

4. Kinpusenji goes prime time

With the successful campaign to designate the Kii Peninsula a UNESCO World Heritage cultural landscape in 2004 and accompanying multi-media tourism promotion campaign, Kinpusenji has emerged in the national media spotlight, thereby greatly expanding its reach and household name and brand recognition. The inclusion of Kinpusenji in a special series on famous shrines and temples in May 2012 by commercial provider Fuji television has further raised the profile of this

rural, mountain temple and the town of Yoshino. The Fuji Television program featured interviews with Tanaka and core temple staff intercut with re-enactments of waterfall austerities by a chiseled, nearly nude male actor with a stirring rock soundtrack. Most noteworthy was the appearance of a group of midde-aged female friends from Osaka who urged viewers to come to Kinpusenji and give Shugendô a try (Fuji television 2012). If viewers were still unconvinced, loving shots of the production of local craft items, folk medicine and seasonal food delicacies demonstrate there is clearly something for every appetite and interest level in Yoshino.

C. Tateishi Kôshô's quiet connectivity

Tateishi Kôshô (立石光正 1955-) only very recently and reluctantly plugged into the Internet in 2011. Though he has a cell phone and computer, his preferred means of communication are face-to-face interaction, conch shell, Fax machine and the occasional hand-written letter. Tateishi is not indifferent to modern communication technologies but says he does not feel compelled to use them. Devotees, students and researchers who support and document Tateishi's activities have helped him establish a modest presence in print and electronic media. Tateishi has a Wikipedia page and homepage, appears in at least two documentary films (Roth and Roth 2010; Abela and McGuire 2009) and has recorded his ocarina, conch and jazz inflected spoken word musings on independently released music albums.[89]

Visitors to Tateishi's homepage can learn about prayer services he offers at Sangakurin and send direct requests to be written on wooden prayer sticks (護摩木 *goma-gi*) and consumed by fire during monthly services. Tateishi does not have established fees for his ritual or guide services. Nor are fees posted for room and board at his training site. It is left to individuals to pay what they can afford. Those who can, give generously; those who cannot, contribute their

[89] See Tateishi's homepage at http://www.e-goma.net. Accessed 4 February 2013.

time and energy to temple upkeep, childcare, cooking, weeding, harvesting or whatever else needs doing. During fieldwork in 2007, Abela filmed Tateishi prepare goma prayer sticks from faxed and mailed requests for academic and business success, recovery from illness, traffic safety and so on. From what I could see in Abela's footage, offerings of 1,000 Yen ($10 USD) per request were most common. Approximately fifty participants attended the ritual at Sangakurin, but at least another half that many prayer sticks were placed in the fire owing to a large number of requests made by those not in attendance. Abela also filmed departing temple guests tidying their rooms, hanging futons to dry and preparing thank you letters and offertory envelopes for Tateishi. These envelopes were tucked discretely under pillows or slipped into linen closets.

Though I had stayed at Sangakurin on two previous occasions during the fire ritual, such behind-the-scenes preparation and evidence of prayer requests and envelopes containing letters and remuneration had escaped my notice. Since Abela could not understand spoken or written Japanese and was less shy than I was about pointing the camera at close range, he often filmed activities and interactions that caught his eye without necessarily knowing all the details about what was happening. Perhaps more importantly, he could do so without the individuals' becoming overly self-conscious as they might on occasions when I the "Shugendô researcher" who understands Japanese picked up the camera. In these moments Tateishi joked that he had better deliver a good performance as a "real" Shugendô priest. After I shut off the camera he would say, "That's enough Shugendô for one day—let's go canoeing!" (Personal communication, Shingu, July 2007).

Abela, for his part, expressed frustration for being ignored during attempts to participate in daily temple activities because he could not communicate in Japanese. But as a cameraman, we found his low profile to be a great advantage. Because Abela was able to capture footage of

activities I had either never noticed or taken for granted, new discoveries were made including the high number of prayer requests sent by FAX and mail, the approximate amount of fees collected and the procedure for compensating Tateishi for room and board at Sangakurin. We never looked inside or filmed the offertory envelopes because we regarded them as private whereas the prayer requests were public. Prayers were written on wooden sticks and publicly displayed in the goma hall shortly before being consumed by fire. Insights gained from observing and filming these ritual transactions increased our understanding and awareness of Tateishi's expansive network outside of his immediate community.

Abela similarly filmed innumerable "Black Cat Express" deliveries (黒猫宅急便 *kuroneko takkyûbin*) containing food, saké and household goods. Abela did so out of fascination with the colorful and compact refrigerated trucks, the drivers' breathtaking efficiency and the surprising frequency of deliveries at Tateishi's remote training site. I later reviewed the footage and realized a half dozen or more such packages arrived daily at great effort and expense over long distances. We thus had a much clearer sense of Tateishi and his devotees' mutual inter-dependence and exchange value. Had Abela not accompanied me to the field and captured these moments on camera, many of these important scenes documenting contemporary Shugendô priests' entrepreneurial spirit in cultivating a devoted community of mutual support might have gone unnoticed. I had previously observed Tateishi receive envelopes containing offerings in exchange for conducting religious rituals and distributing talismans (守り *mamori*) in face to face encounters. But I had no idea so many requests, offerings and packages arrived from such long distances from individuals who rarely if ever attended services on site. The amount of food,

household supplies and other gifts received via express courier from devotees living in Japan and abroad, including a rare and expensive *hang* drum from Switzerland, came into sharper focus.[90]

Contemporary Shugendô has the opposite of the succession crisis in Zen Buddhist temples where there are plenty of temples available but not enough heirs willing to become priests to care for devotees (Matsubara 2009). There are simply not enough Shugendô temples to support full-time priests in the present age. For this reason, priests like Tateishi who establish independent temples and training sites must be extremely resourceful and entrepreneurial in order to survive. The regular arrival of the Black Cat Express delivery truck and steady flow of visitors to Sangakurin suggests that Tateishi's temple is thriving on the strength of broad support by a dynamic and generous community, most of whom live some distance away.

D. Photojournalism and mass market paperbacks

Beyond Tanaka, Gojô, Tateishi and their affiliates and collaborators' communication and outreach strategies, what other media sources inform the contemporary practice of Shugendô? Photojournalist Fujita Shôichi has published a number of popular books with mainstream publisher Gakkyû in their "Esoterica Collection." He has also contributed photographs and collaborated with Tanaka Riten (Tanaka 2005) and guest-edited special issues of popular magazines and journals that have focused on Shugendô. Fujita's work can be found at affordable prices (1800-2300 Yen; approximately USD $20) in any mid-sized bookstore. Fujita's publications come in a popular format that fits easily into a coat pocket or briefcase. Because

[90] The hang drum (hang is Bernese for ''hand'') is a percussion instrument invented in Bern, Switzerland in 2000 by Felix Rohner and Sabina Scharer of PANart. Resembling a UFO, the hang is formed from fusing two steel drums together. PANart does not advertise so the only way to procure one is to visit the factory in Bern. A limited number of hang are produced annually and there is apparently a minimum five-year waiting period for new orders. For further details, visit http://www.hang-music.com/hang.php. To hear a sample of hang virtuosity, visit Austrian musician Manu Delago's homepage: http://www.manudelago.com. Both sites accessed 4 February 2013.

most bookstores now provide discrete paper covers, fellow train passengers need not know one is reading about an esoteric mountain ascetic tradition en route to the office.

In *Running in the Other World,* Fujita intersperses black and white photographs of iconic Shugendô training landscapes, material culture (torn tabi slippers and straw sandals) and portraits of monks in training doing extended, extreme trials (fasting, vigils, gathering firewood) with conversational accounts of encounters at various training sites throughout Japan. In viewing Fujita's photos and reading his evocative prose, one discovers answers to questions such as, "How do practitioners make sense of occasional experiences doing shugyô while installing quarter-panels on Toyotas, caring for the sick or managing a large publishing house the following Monday morning?"

Fujita introduces the narrative of healing and transformation of a Toyota foreman named Sakai Norimasa (age 69) who he met while participating in the Okugake training route in the early 1990s. Drafted during the war, Sakai returned home uninjured thanks to the "kami and buddhas watching over him" (Fujita 1995:38). Since Sakai does not reveal to factory co-workers how he spends his weekends, few outside his immediate family have heard him tell the following story:

> Mountains…the more I go, the more frightening and harsh I think they are. The last time, at the Zenki (前鬼) rear ascetic trial area (裏行場 *ura gyôba*), someone slipped and fell. He was hanging from the chain by only his hands. For what seemed to take an unbearably long time, he fell as many as ten meters. He fell onto my back, but neither of us was injured in the slightest. "It's a miracle," I thought. At the time what I sensed was that some kind of power had worked for me. Anyway, just before he fell, that terror in his face when he looked down—I'll never forget it. His eyes flashed open and his face lost its color. A dead man's expression would have had been softer. If I had screamed, nothing would have come out (Fujita 1995:37-38).

Fujita emphasizes otherworldly dimensions of shugyô yet positions himself as a layman with academic and artistic credentials who does shugyô in hiking boots and mountaineering gear, not

tabi and ascetics' robes (Fujita 2005:2-3). He provides an interesting counterpoint in co-published, collaborative work with Tanaka, who takes pains to demystify and de-emphasize the paranormal aspects of Shugendô. Tanaka situates himself as a village or "settled" yamabushi (里の山伏 *sato no yamabushi*) who spends the majority of his work life behind a desk, seminar table and plugged into social media.

In addition to ascetic media introduced above, one can find myriad websites, Facebook pages, Youtube videos, comic books,[91] children's stories and pulp paperbacks. Simply search "Shugendô" in Amazon Japan or Yahoo Japan and a plethora of works to suit every taste can be found. Future research evaluating this media avalanche in a systematic fashion will no doubt deduce further trends regarding the contemporary appetite for Shugendô and how the tradition is evolving in light of changing circumstances and needs. Space limits preclude further comment here.

III. Portraits of contemporary Shugendô participants

A. Yamamoto: an auspicious dream

I now return to Yamamoto's story of what triggered his participation in the Lotus Ascent in the late 1990s. One night in a dream Yamamoto's wife saw a gentleman with a long white beard dressed in a brocaded surplice and wearing tall clogs. The dream figure assured her she and her husband need not worry, that they would soon become the proud parents of a beautiful son. When she awoke she felt wonderful, confident and fully at ease. It was as though a great blockage in the flow of their lives had been removed. After verifying the sage's auspicious message with a home pregnancy test, Mrs. Yamamoto shared her joyful news and details of the

[91] Hajime's *My Darling is a Yamabushi Salaryman* (ウチのダンナは サラリーマン山伏) is one such title (2010).

dream. Yamamoto was elated, yet realized they still had another nine-month pregnancy and delivery to contend with. He wondered who the mysterious dream figure might be.

Having an early interest in these kinds of miraculous happenings and auspicious messages vouchsafed in dreams, Yamamoto pressed his wife for more details, checking them against those of miraculous figures from the stories of his childhood. Her dream elements raced through his mind during work and even began to appear in his own dreams. After confirming the clogs, wooden staff and Buddhist surplice, he became convinced the man in the dream was En no Gyôja, the legendary founder of Shugendô. Yamamoto did some further investigation and learned about introductory ascetic training opportunities (体験修行 *taiken shugyô*) created for lay people at Kinpusenji. In consultation with his wife, he decided to sign up for the Lotus Ascent.

He rearranged his work schedule and took an overnight highway bus to Osaka, eventually boarding local trains to Yoshino. It was neither a short nor inexpensive trip. Yamamoto traveled to Mount Ômine to offer prayers of gratitude to En no Gyôja for the safe birth of his son and to learn more about the legendary holy man enshrined in numerous sites along the trail. He sought the advice of priest-guides he met during the Lotus Ascent and was invited to take part in a part-time ordination program. Over a number of weekends he was initiated into the Tendai-affiliated Honzan-ha sect of Shugendô, took formal precepts and received a Buddhist name. During these weekend training courses he received instruction in playing the conch from Tateishi. Back in Tokyo, Yamamoto attended Tateishi's conch lessons at a Kinpusenji branch temple on Saturdays he had free.

Yamamoto subsequently became a devoted Shugendô practitioner. This means not only doing mountain training twice a year on Mount Ômine, but also offering daily prayers to En no

Gyôja, Zaô Gongen and Fudô-myô-ô at a small altar in his cramped apartment. Additionally, he performs shugyô on a miniature Ômine course on Mount Mitake on the outskirts of Tokyo.[92] He also joins other Shugendô practioners and conch enthusiasts at Yoyogi Park on occasion. Who knew such a wealth of opportunities is available to Tokyo's urban shugenja?

1. Everywhere you go you can find a sacred mountain

In 2007 when we reconnected in Tokyo, Yamamoto indicated that he no longer feels compelled to attend Tateishi's monthly conch sessions or attend annual events like the Lotus Ascent. He still maintains a home altar where he venerates Fudô myô-ô and goes regularly to Yoyogi Park to play his conch shell and meditate on his own initiative. He also offers guidance to younger practitioners who seek him out among a network of urban ascetics in Tokyo's creative industry. In a concise response to my questions about this shift in his practices, Yamamoto indicated that he felt he had been given permission to continue his ascetic practice exclusively in Tokyo after meeting the renowned Enryakuji kaihôgyô practitioner Sakai Yuasa on Mount Hiei. Sakai listened to Yamamoto describe his dilemma about wishing to continue his practice but finding that it took him away from his family during precious weekends. Sakai then introduced the teaching, "Everywhere you go you can find a sacred mountain"（聖山至る所有り *seizan itaru tokoro ari*). This statement encapsulates the Zen Buddhist concept of radical non-duality and immediately struck a chord in Yamamoto, who was entering a phase of contentment and ease in his career and family life as the father of two pre-adolescent boys.

As I mentioned above, Yamamoto carries his conch everywhere he goes. On his sleek mountain bike, with streaked blonde and brown hair, ready smile and refreshing sincerity, he

[92] Ian Reader discusses the creation of miniaturized copies of prominent ascetic training courses in more accessible urban and suburban spaces, including a shopping mall parking lot (1988).

cuts a remarkable figure against the typical Tokyo street scene carrying his conch on his back. Just how are we to make sense of this young man's miraculous introduction to and participation in a centuries-old form of mountain asceticism? How do his practices fit into his "normal" life as a television producer, husband and father of two small boys? What about his compatriots at the conch shell lessons, practice sessions in Yoyogi Park and shugyô at a nearby miniature Ômine course?

2. Socio-economic context of urban Shugendô practitioners

Based upon conversations with Yamamoto's co-participants in the conch shell lessons and meditation gatherings in Yoyogi park, quite a few of them occupy insecure positions in culture or retail industries and must work one or more part-time jobs to make a living as Yamamoto did a decade earlier. Certain of these individuals self-identify as NEET or *freeters*. It must be made clear that NEET and *freeters* are neither monolithic categories nor are all individuals identified with either signifier characterized by the same degree of personal choice, responsibility or mobility. There are important social, educational and class distinctions to be noted. Scholars of Japan's political and moral economy differentiate between the different types of NEET and *freeters* who have appeared at different stages of Japan's economic crisis beginning in the late 1980s.

The first wave, according to sociologist Reiko Kosugi, were creative and cultural workers who refused to accept full-time office work in anticipation of one day making it in the cultural sphere (2006:7). Yamamoto can be regarded as a successful *freeter* of this first wave. Having worked an odd assortment of part-time jobs for a number of years that afforded him leisure to pursue his own creative and other interests, Yamamoto eventually enrolled in a media production degree at a special trade school (専門学校 *senmon gakkô*). After working his way up the

production ladder over a decade, Yamamoto became a television producer for a commercial provider in Tokyo.

Later in the mid to late nineties, according to Kosugi, increasing numbers of young people could no longer find full-time employment of any category—it was not out of personal choice—yet they were lumped into the group of so-called labor renunciates. Conservative and neoliberal discourse has tended to co-opt the first-wave *freeter* as "carefree seeker" in order to blame young people ("personal responsibility") for being lazy or spoiled children (Driscoll 2007:172). Such conservative critiques elide structural factors such as outsourcing, legalization and normalization of temporary contracts and mandatory unpaid overtime that is endemic in post-bubble Japan. At the same time, *freeters* are said to be a useful "fetish" of "fictive capital" that enable critics to blame the victim for their personal financial and social precarity as well as Japan's zero-growth economy because it was freeters' "personal choice" to forego participation in the labor market (Driscoll 2007:174). Conservatives and neoliberals find it increasingly repugnant that *freeters* and NEET's reject the logic of sacrifice and deferral that drove "Japan Inc" for three decades whereby white and blue-collar workers agreed to forego basic pleasures in the present for the "promise of a better life in the future" (Driscoll 2007:172).

Public (mis)perceptions of FREETERS are fraught due to misleading media representations of them as "problem youth" in general unwilling to work, according to sociologist Kuniko Ishiguro (2008:7). In fact, Ishiguro argues, second-wave freeters are willing to work, but because they come from less privileged families and lower educational backgrounds they cannot find stable employment and establish a household and family as Yamamoto has done. Lack of personal or family savings to pay for trade school and other training opportunities, not laziness, explains their lack of social mobility. For this reason sociologist Reiko Kosugi has suggested universal access to job training in public institutions (2006:3).

The 2006 NHK special series "Working Poor: No Matter How Hard We Work, We Can Never Attain Prosperity" exploded the neoliberal myth of the lazy, shiftless *freeter* by giving a human face to individuals struggling to survive despite great structural and personal hurdles. The television program depicts a homeless and unemployed migrant from Tohoku in his thirties who relocated to Tokyo after being laid off as a maritime engineer. He fails to show up for a job interview in nearby Kanagawa arranged by a staff member at a Tokyo employment agency ("Hello Work") because he does not have enough pocket money to pay the thousand yen fare (USD $10) for passage on a local commuter train (NHK 2006). A pixellated image of his postal savings book reveals his account balance hovers around half the required train fare. Without a stable address, he cannot register for professional development classes and worries that prospective employers will not hire a homeless person with gaps in his employment history. The second-wave (mid-1990s onward) *freeter's* inability to find work, according to Yuki Honda, highlights the inefficiency of Japanese educational policy responses to the growing numbers of NEET, *freeters*, restructured professionals and working poor, including insufficient vocational training opportunities in public and private schools and adult education centers (Honda 2004:111-13 cited in Ishiguro 2008:7).

Activist and prolific author Amamiya Karin is reputed to have first used the term "precariat" in Japan (Amamiya 2007). Synonymous with Japan's "working poor" and connected to temporary workers such as the Tokyo hairdressers who made headlines and won broad public support for their attempts to unionize (Kawazoe and Yuasa 2007), precariat combines the adjective "precarious" with the noun "proletariat" and refers to unprotected temporary or seasonal workers such as the "Fukushima Fifty" skeleton crew left to monitor the Daiichi Nuclear Plant after the Triple Disaster of 11 March 2011 (Penney 2011 para 4). This neologism ("precariat") was first coined in the 1980s by French sociologists (Obinger 2009:2). Amamiya

counters conservatives' attempts to co-opt freeters as "carefree" or "lazy seekers" and assign the blame for Japan's stalled growth by pointing out that many individuals who may have opted out of full-time, corporate employment may have reveled in their first taste of freedom and autonomy but subsequently realized they would be unable to marry, raise children or own a home (Amamiya 2007; Akagi 2007). Their tenuous situation causes immense anxiety and suffering as well as vulnerability (to predatory lenders, among others). The working poor and precariat's situation can be linked to the kind of debilitating poverty that arises from attempts to make a living from piece-meal, part-time work at minimum wage without employment protection or benefits (Amamiya 2007; Kawazoe & Yuasa 2007).

I was initially surprised to learn that fewer than a third of the members of the three conch shell lesson at Kinpusenji's branch temple in Tokyo in 2002 and 2003 had ever participated in the Lotus Ascent or other training activities on Mount Ômine. Given their enthusiasm and enjoyment, I supposed their interactions with Tateishi would serve as a springboard for practice at Kinpusenji in the same way that participation in the Lotus Ascent often served as a prerequisite for the Okugake. There are two obvious reasons why so many young urban participants in Tateishi's conch shell lessons or more informal contemplative training sessions at Yoyogi Park never make it to Yoshino. First, few participants can afford the round trip train fare from Tokyo (approximately 30,000 Yen; USD $300), Lotus Ascent participation fees (50,000 Yen; USD $500) or take time off work. These urban working poor have few or no paid vacation days and typically must accept any shifts given them. Second, the majority of these urban participants are women who are unable to ascend to Mount Ômine's peak due to gender prohibition.

On the other hand, female Shugendô participants from Osaka, Kobe and Kyoto do attend ritual events at Kinpusenji such as the Frog Hop and part-time ordination procedures because the

distance and required outlay of time and money is significantly less than for Tokyo residents. One can reach Yoshino by local train or car from each of these cities in the Kansai region within two hours for less than 5,000 Yen (USD $50). Since women cannot participate in the overnight Lotus Ascent, they avoid the expensive participation fees.[93]

Viewing the contemporary practice of Shugendô by urban lay participants in Tokyo and Osaka through the lenses of gender, class and geography adds further depth to our understanding of Sakai Yuasa's teaching, "Everywhere you go you can find a sacred mountain." Such expressions of radical non-duality authorize radical inclusivity with respect to philosophical, spatial, socio-economic and gender concerns and ensure a dynamic membership who enter at the level of participation and location that suits their needs and budgets.

B. *Kajikawa: semi-retired Osaka electrician with "boorish" son-in-law*

As I received letters and photos from fellow first-year participants in the 2002 Lotus Ascent, some of whom confided anxieties about impending retirement or other life transitions, I was struck by the ways certain individuals learned to integrate discipline and confidence gained from the climb in daily life. A semi-retired electrician from Osaka named Kajikawa reported having found the necessary forbearance to deal more patiently with conflicts with his daughter and "boorish" (野蛮人 *yabanjin*) son-in-law—a foreigner, like me, he pointed out. In Kajikawa's letters and accompanying photos of golf outings with his son-in-law, I found vivid and real-time illustration of Ian Reader's conceptions of pilgrimage as a lens through which one continuously re-examines one's life (2005:249-253). I also found myself implicated in fellow participants'

[93] Anthropologist Ann-Marie Bouchy presents several vivid portraits of contemporary female practitioners at Shogo-In (Kyoto) and highlights the productive tension between gender prohibition at Mount Ômine and increasing rates of female participation and elevation to high rank by several prominent female ascetics in the last few decades (Bouchy 2009:39-43). For a valuable survey of participation rates by female ascetics during the Okugake retreat gleaned from Shogo-In archives over the past several decades, see Bouchy 2009:39-41.

lives. Kajikawa realized, through our shared experiences and correspondence, that not all foreigners' behaviors were as opaque as he had initially perceived his son-in-law's to be. Since we had gotten along well during the challenging physical conditions of the Lotus Ascent, Kajikawa wrote, it gave him confidence that he could one day find common ground with his son-in-law. Though I never asked him directly, I could not help but wonder if this troubled cross-cultural relationship and new status in his adult daughter's life, more so than looming retirement (his stated motivation), propelled Kajikawa up the mountain. I also suspect that my outsider status may have led him to seek me out during the Lotus Ascent and initiate a correspondence and friendship. These are merely personal speculations that neither of us could likely verify. If one only accesses the experience of mountain training, Reader surmises (and I agree), the researcher gains a most limited understanding of the significance of ascetic practice within the larger matrices of cultural and social life.

C. John Deters: moving beyond fear, embracing embodied intuition

John Deters, an American neuropath in his late fifties who helps clients attain deep sleep for a living, has a background in comparative mythology and aesthetics. He writes lengthy, articulate letters containing quotations from Joseph Campbell and James Joyce. Campbell's description of an encounter with Kumano shugenja in the 1950s planted a seed in Deters' consciousness thirty-five years prior in a first-year university religion seminar. Deters has lived a short distance from a yoga ashram north of San Diego since his student days. It was in the ashram that he first experienced meditative disciplines in the late 1960s. When I asked him what brought him to the ashram Deters mentioned that he had some bad experiences with mind-altering substances in early adolescence and needed to "find a way to rebalance" (Personal correspondence 2012).

Deters contacted us by email shortly after viewing the documentary *Shugendô Now* on a DVD he purchased on the Internet in 2009. He found his way to Tateishi's training site in

Kumano within two months of seeing the film and has now visited Sangakurin on three occasions in the last three years. Deters' Vimeo channel features a dozen short videos culled from footage and reflections he made while participating in Shugendô rituals at Sangakurin and traveling around Japan. Deters and I first met at the 2010 International Buddhist Film Festival at the Yerba Buena Arts Center in San Francisco. He attended a screening of our documentary and invited Abela and me to breakfast with his spouse and son at a nearby farmer's market.

When I asked Deters during a Skype conversation to describe his first encounter with Tateishi he said he felt much as the Heian era Japanese poet Saigyô (1118-1190) described having come face to face with divinities venerated at the Grand Shrine of Ise. Deters then read aloud the following poem from a scrap of paper on his desk:

Unknown to me what resideth here:
Tears flow from a sense of unworthiness and gratitude.[94]

According to Deters, when Tateishi first played his conch shell for him and his family in the open space of Tateishi's temple surrounded by a rushing river on two sides and rice fields and forested mountains on the others, he was so profoundly moved by the performance that he wept unexpectedly. Even in retelling the story, I could hear the emotion in his voice. In Tateishi's company, Deters spent his time receiving instruction in playing the conch trumpet and walking the treacherous waterfall course.

Deters shared with me a story of his first foray into the forest with Tateishi, a young woman who frequents his temple and a chain-smoking male Japanese participant. Deters said he lacked the proper shoes for the course, but had no idea what kind of footwear would have

[94] This Heian era poem is often attributed to Saigyô (西行 1118-1190). Prince Takahito Mikasa cited this verse in an address to the Eleventh International Congress for the History of Religions (Kageyama 1973:9-10). This poem is found on various Internet poetry anthologies and widely cited in popular writings.

enabled him to navigate the course at the same level of surefootedness as Tateishi and the other two individuals.

> It was as though their shoes made it possible to gain traction even on slimy rocks under the water and on sheer rock faces. Meanwhile I was slipping and falling all over the place (Deters, personal communication by Skype, June 2012).

After following the trail with Tateishi and the others for several kilometers and becoming quite fatigued, Deters tried to excuse himself and asked whether he might wait at a mutually agreed upon spot for the group to return. This represented the rationale mainstream of Deters's personality and mindset. Tateishi apparently refused to accept Deters's attempt to bow out. Tateishi promised that Deters' efforts would soon be rewarded and that he had no choice but to push further ahead. Staying behind and playing it safe was not an option, Tateishi informed him, because the group would not be returning by the same route. Deters would be left stranded with no means of returning to Sangakurin. Deters, sensing that he was being challenged beyond his comfort level yet feeling secure in Tateishi's care, agreed to continue. He made this decision despite having only made Tateishi's acquaintance mere hours before. Deters emphasized the protective care Tateishi lavished him with over the next couple kilometers. This enabled Deters to submit to the practice and its mental and physical demands. He let himself enter into the rhythms of the forest, the assorted rock-climbing, river passing and cautious negotiation of the rugged landscape. Tateishi did not reveal what awaited them thirty minutes further up the trail: the seven meter waterfall slide and aquamarine pool discussed above ("Sliding to Rebirth"). This is perhaps the most beautiful and refreshing landscape I have ever visited. Deters mentioned his disbelief that he had actually made it to that location within a few hours of his arrival to Tateishi's training site as the waterfall slide had been a primary emotional and spiritual attraction for visiting Kumano and meeting Tateishi after viewing the documentary.

Deters said that contacting me out of the blue by email after seeing the film, disembarking on his first trip to Japan with his spouse and four-year-old son and seeking out Tateishi at his rural training site were actions quite out of character with the highly rationale and "fear-based" decision-making he typically follows. When I asked what had changed within him, he indicated that he was unsure but that having entered into this new stream of intuitive and corporeal decision-making (which felt by turns exhilarating and terrifying), he simply submitted to it in the same way Tateishi had encouraged him to do during the waterfall course in 2010. He indicated he had been lately trying to integrate the teaching, "From mountain practices to home practices."

Though Deters speaks almost no Japanese and Tateishi's English is limited, Deters and his spouse and their four-year-old son passed nearly a week together with Tateishi and his wife and six-year old son. By all reports these two families made a profound connection. Tateishi also spoke enthusiastically and appreciatively of the encounter when we spoke by telephone after Deters' visit. During Deters' second trip in the summer of 2011, Tateishi performed a special goma ritual to honor Deters's spouse's deceased father. This gentleman is of Mexican and Basque ancestry whose dying wish was to have some of his ashes spread in a Japanese forest. Apparently Deters' father-in-law had spent some time in Japan in his youth and felt enormous affection for the people and the mountain landscape. Tateishi, Deters and their spouses subsequently spread Deters' father-in-law's ashes in the forest along the Kumano trail. In the summer of 2012 Deters returned once more to Sangakurin with his adolescent son. I have not yet heard details of the visit but did hear it was a positive experience overall.

D. Miyamoto: Osaka concrete company president's U-turn

A concrete manufacturing company president in his forties from Osaka of Korean ancestry described how he understood his participation during the Lotus Ascent as follows. "Disciplining

yourself, gaining mastery over one's heart-mind—that's why we do shugyô" (Miyamoto, personal communication, July 2007, Mount Ômine). Miyamoto explained his motivation for coming to Mount Ômine during a short break near the midway point.

> The last time I came to Mount Ômine was with my elderly father, so my priority was supporting him. This time I'm on my own and can fully have a look at my self. In this respect, this experience is somewhat different. I find myself at the midway point of my life. In the second half I'd like to regain my "beginner's mind," living fully with the spirit of my youth. It feels like a U-turn (Personal communication, July 2007, Mount Ômine).

Miyamoto was accompanied by Fujie, a thirty-something nightclub owner from Osaka's pleasure quarters. Apparently when Fujie learned of Miyamoto's plan to do the Lotus Ascent again, he asked if he might join him. After all, Fujie said, "It's not something you get to do every day" (Personal communication, July 2007, Osaka). The two men had spent a weekend doing shugyô at Sangakurin with Tateishi Kôshô in preparation for the Lotus Ascent. They also told me they abstained from alcohol, meat and sex for one week prior to their departure. Fujie mentioned that he had prayed for his eight-year old daughter's success in an upcoming piano recital when we reached Mount Ômine's summit.

Miyamoto and Fujie were part of the first-time participant group (新客 *shinkyaku*) with Abela and me in 2007 and were instrumental in helping us capture high quality, immersive footage of the Lotus Ascent. In one scene near Mount Ômine's summit, Fujie appears cradling Abela's camera with an extreme close-up on his face as he negotiates the steep, rocky terrain leading up to entry into the cave as womb for rebirth. In this particular training ground (行場 *gyôba*), the potential for physical injury and even death is present if practitioners do not maintain absolute concentration and care in selecting each placement of their feet and hands. The cliffs climbed here are on the very edge of a deep ravine. The week after Abela and I filmed the Lotus Ascent in 2007, we received a call from one of our co-participants announcing that a research

associate from Kobe University we had drank celebratory beers with following completion of the event plunged nearly sixty meters on that same set of cliffs when he lost his footing. Apparently he avoided a deadly free fall by scrambling to gain a handhold on tree branches and brambles growing out of the rock face. We were told he had to be airlifted to a regional emergency hospital for extensive surgery.

Fujie's acceptance of Abela's request to take the camera was a risk negotiated between him and Abela after gaining rapport during the first twelve or so hours of our interaction. Though only a short distance below them on the rock face, I was unaware of Abela's having passed the camera to Fujie and likely would have discouraged both of them from doing it. This method was the only way to obtain this shot of Fujie at that moment and its inclusion adds an intimacy and immersive quality to the film viewers often comment upon (Abela and McGuire 2009:1h19m14s). Miyamoto is also seen on camera carrying Abela's backpack containing his camera equipment. Miyamoto kindly offered to do so enabling Abela to focus on his shots and take some weight off his aching knees. This generous gesture invited further contact and discussion, and resulted in an invitation to visit Miyamoto and Fujie in Osaka. Upon descent from Mount Ômine and several weeks' filming at Sangakurin in Kumano, we rejoined the two friends to discover how they integrated the experience in their personal and work lives. Without having secured this invitation, we simply would not have been able to accomplish a key goal of the project to document integration of mountain learning in the city. Most other leads for potential on-screen characters to follow during the Lotus Ascent (participants I had met in 2002 and 2003) dissolved upon arriving in Japan because of a variety of life circumstances and decisions beyond our and our acquaintances' control.

Fujie and Miyamoto's having befriended us during the Lotus Ascent was no accident, however. Tateishi had in effect given us the "golden handshake" in their presence just prior to

the start of the Lotus Ascent the day before in Yoshino. Their arrival from Osaka in Miyamoto's enormous four-wheel drive Toyota Landcruiser punctuated by deep bottom bass lines of psychedelic trance music could not have been more surreal. Abela and I were lost in a village neighboring Yoshino where the offertory lotuses would be harvested from a pond impossibly filled with the auspicious blooms symbolic of the Buddha's Enlightenment. The sight of the iridescent pink lotuses and sounds of psychedelic trance music and conch trumpet blasts announcing the start of ritual time are a sensory experience I will not soon forget. With this important though apparently random introduction to Miyamoto and Fujie at the lotus pond, our fates and that of our film project were effectively placed on an entirely new set of rails propelling us toward Osaka (not originally on our itinerary) and ultimately back to Yoshino for a series of experiences and discoveries (including the Three Day Monk Camp) neither Abela nor I could have anticipated. Film critic Eliot Weinberger's insight that Surrealism, with its emphasis upon chance, improvisation, and the found object, may well be the ideal genre for Westerners attempting to represent another culture in documentary film could not be more apt (1992:46).

Three aspects of Miyamoto's personality and life experiences captured my attention during the week we spent together in Osaka. First, he dedicates substantial time and energy doing volunteer work and mentoring young people like Fujie and a host of other young entertainers in Osaka's pleasure quarters. Second, the U-turn Miyamoto described above is related to the onset of middle age and late marriage to a younger wife, but also his recent realization about how destructive his concrete manufacturing business has been for Japan's environment and economy. Three, his and his family's engagements with Pure Land Buddhism and Shugendô have enabled them to overcome discrimination and other hardships to become successful, respected members of the Osaka community.

Experiences delivering humanitarian aid to homeless and displaced Kobe residents

following the 1995 Kobe-Hanshin earthquake seems to have had a significant impact upon Miyamoto's outlook and worldview. Because he has friends who are entertainers, Miyamoto recruited musicians, magicians, singers and clowns to travel with him to homeless shelters in Kobe to lift earthquake survivors' spirits. Abela and I interviewed a magician at an Osaka club who had participated in these Kobe visits. It was hard not to be moved by the stories he told about the people he met who had lost everything in the quake.

Whenever we ventured out together with Miyamoto in Osaka numerous young men and women of Japanese, Korean and Chinese ancestry would emerge from their work places to call out "Aniki" (兄貴 "big brother") and spend a few minutes catching up with Miyamoto. Abela and I met actors, comedians, hostess bar ladies, sushi chefs and the aforementioned magician working in various establishments Miyamoto and Fujie frequented. We accompanied a caravan of such individuals to a psychedelic trance party atop a mountain in Shiga prefecture (near Kyoto). It was during this period of extended interaction that I observed how Miyamoto attentively listened to these young people as they told stories of how they negotiated precarious work and personal life circumstances and sought answers to questions about their life's purpose. Miyamoto did not provide direct advice or counsel, but instead posed questions to gather further information and offered experiences from his own life where he had faced difficulties and hardships owing to his identity as a resident Korean. Several of Miyamoto's young entourage told us they had even accompanied him and Fujie to Sangakurin to get out of the city, recharge their batteries and slide toward rebirth in Tateishi's waterfall course.

When Abela and I toured Miyamoto's concrete company headquarters in 2007 we saw a new water purification system that returns effluent used in manufacturing concrete to the municipal water system cleaner than when it came in. When I inquired about what had

motivated him to begin thinking about the broader impacts of his business practices, Miyamoto referred to his time doing shugyô at Mount Ômine and Sangakurin.

> What we learn from nature is how small we humans are and how vast the spirit is. This new project is very different from my usual work. Rather than call it a departure, let's say it's karma. To see what one must do appear before your eyes—this kind of guidance is exceptionally rare. I have come to realize the importance of nature, perhaps a bit more so than the average person. My business is bad, not just for humans but for animals and trees, too. Our environment must take priority (Personal communication, July 2007, Osaka).

Having recently married and begun seriously thinking about fatherhood were other contributing factors to Miyamoto's newfound awareness of and reflection about how to address the devastating impacts of his family's business. Because his concrete manufacturing business is the source of his family's wealth, status and identity over several generations, simply shutting down the factory appears not to be an option. It would mean having to lay off fifty employees at various levels of the business operations and forfeiting the good will and affection of many in his community who had enabled his family's success.

During the week we spent in Osaka, Miyamoto spoke about tentative plans he has made with partners to invest in technologies that will clean up the industrial process and remove PCBs and other toxic contaminants from Japan's waterways.[95] A long-term goal of Miyamoto's is to

[95] "PCB" or polychlorinated biphenyl refers to any one of 209 possible configurations of industrially produced organichlorides containing two benzene rings. Because of their water solubility and insulating properties, PCBs have been used as coolant fluids in transformers and electric motors. PCBs store in body fat and bioaccumulate. They are known carcinogens in animals and suspected carcinogens in humans. They cause various skin ailments and reproductive disorders. In Japan, the Kanemi Oil Poisoning Case in 1968 resulted in a cessation of production of PCBs and those who held PCBs were forced to store any products contaminated by them. In 2001, "The Law Concerning Special Measures for Promotion of Proper Treatment of PCB Waste" mandated that all PCBs be safely disposed of by July 2016. Source: Japan Environmental Safety Corporation. http://www.jesconet.co.jp/eg/pcb/pcb.html. Accessed 4 February 2013. Due to their toxicity and classification as persistant organic pollutants, PCBs were banned in the United States by Congress in 1979, in Canada in 1999 by the Canadian Environmental Protection Agency, and in Stockholm in 2001 by the "Convention

develop further partnerships with Hong Kong and Korean business leaders to carry out remediation projects in shared regional waterways. The difficulty seems to be finding other business leaders with significant capital who are willing to risk their fortunes on an uncertain business venture when guaranteed high profits are easy to obtain from status quo operations that degrade the environment.

I do not intend to portray Miyamoto as a saint, but it is hard to dismiss him as a remarkable business leader and unlikely mentor in Osaka's pleasure quarters. As he explained it to me, participation in Shugendô and Pure Land Buddhist ritual practices helped Miyamoto and his family overcome displacement, alienation, pain and loneliness that inhered from the colonial annexation of Korean in 1910. Subsequent land reforms by the Japanese Governor General's Office displaced thousands of Korean families and prompted them to flee their homeland to seek employment in Japanese cities like Osaka (Hardacre 1984:6). Except for a minority of students, most Koreans who arrived to Japan between 1910 and 1945 (Miyamoto's grandparents' generation) worked in construction, mining or factories—the lowest paid and most insecure work available (Hardacre 1984:6). Miyamoto's current wealth and status indicates that his grandparents must have arrived with or quickly accumulated sufficient capital and networks in Osaka to establish themselves in the construction industry, a sphere of economic activity that was open to Koreans.

Rather than luxuriate in vengeful (though understandable) race hatred and claim perpetual victim status (a dubious position likely to be met with minimal sympathy and limited possibility for legal redress), the Miyamoto family instead sought solace in their religious community and ritual practices that allowed them to move forward in integrating themselves into

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on Persistent Organic Polllutants." Source: Canadian Environmental Protection Agency: http://www.ec.gc.ca/bpc-pcb/default.asp?lang=En&n=663E7488-1. Accessed 4 February 2013.

the dominant society. Their actions no doubt had a formative influence on Miyamoto as a youth and young adult, allowing him to grow into an exceedingly compassionate, thoughtful and kind individual with a broadminded sense of responsibility and respect for racial and religious diversity. Participation in mountain training rituals at Mount Ômine and Kumano has also helped facilitate his growth into a civic leader and aspiring environmentally sound business leader, despite his having been born the eldest son and heir of a thriving concrete manufacturing company.

Miyamoto's story fits into a broader context of global corporate leaders belatedly coming to terms with the environmental, social and economic devastation of externalizing the real costs of operating their businesses. As Ray Anderson (1934-2011), former chairman of Interface Carpet (North Carolina) frankly admitted in the documentary *The Corporation*, "A corporation is an externalizing machine in the same way a shark is a killing machine. Corporations externalize to the extent an unwary and uncaring public allows them to do so" (Achbar, Abbott, and Bakan 2003). Anderson revolutionized his industry by producing biodegradable, modular carpets based on design principles of Biomimicry and powering his factory on methane gas released from a nearby landfill. Anderson implemented these changes only after having been made to realize he and his company had no long-term sustainable vision (Anderson 1998, 2009). Anderson's epiphany, or what he characterized as a "spear in his chest," came when a customer sent him a copy of Paul Hawken's watershed text *The Ecology of Commerce: A declaration of sustainability* and pointedly asked him, "What's your environmental vision?" (1993). Anderson had never considered that his business contributed directly to the mass extinction of wildlife and declining human health resulting from toxicity of the air, water and soil.

There are also plenty of examples of opportunism and "greenwashing" among apparently contrite corporate leaders. Looking for solutions from the very industries that have created the

problems in the first place is fraught with risk. But there is a growing body of evidence that sincerity, altruism and religious convictions are at play in a select number of business leaders who have begun accounting for their enterprise's operations in ways that capture the full costs of production, distribution and disposal of their company's output (Bird and Velasquez 2006; Bird, Smucker and Velasquez 2009).

IV. Conclusions

I have presented four portraits of contemporary lay practitioners and a review of ascetic promotional media to situate contemporary Shugendô practices within the broader context of Japanese socio-economic, religious and cultural life from the late 1970s to the present. Accounts of diverse individuals' experiences and notions of the efficacy of human action in the religious and social spheres show that a rural mountain ascetic tradition has enduring and broad appeal among modern, urban Japanese people. I have also shown how media-savvy Shugendô priests and their affiliates have creatively transformed and promoted traditional teachings and practices to suit the needs of busy urban people. New Age discourses of healing and etiologies of various psycho-social ailments have similarly been incorporated into the practices as a means of addressing concerns about and new possibilities arising from shifting post-industrial and post-bubble socio-economic and existential realities.

Mountain ascetic training opportunities within contemporary Shugendô satisfy diverse needs and desires across broad socio-economic, geographical and cultural communities. During fieldwork I have observed unlikely friendships and associations develop in the mountains and cities where Korean cement company presidents, unemployed and unskilled youth, Osaka pleasure quarters' entertainers, former Aum Shinrikyô cult members, loggers, international financiers, California neuropaths, precarious entrepreneurial healers, spirit consultants and

greens keepers come together for ascetic training.

Following participation in Tateishi Kôshô's "Slide to Rebirth" for a diverse group of practitioners in 2007, we came across a university student from suburban Kobe who had lost his way along the Kumano trail. Sizing up our group (which included an elegantly dressed oncologist, New Age "color therapist," Waldorf schoolteacher, former Tokyo film industry worker, elderly nurse, and Abela and me), the young adventure seeker from Kobe blurted out: "What's the connection between all of you…?"

The Kobe student initially refused Tateishi's offer of a lift to the train station despite being hopelessly lost, without water or food and any real prospects for finding his way back home. My sense was that he was anxious about the company he would find himself in after squeezing into Tateishi's tiny van. After we dropped him off at the local train station, he expressed his gratitude by giving Tateishi a twenty Euro bill, the only cash in his wallet. I had the impression he would return to Kobe and wonder whether the encounter had actually really happened. Who were these people? What were they all doing tramping around in the forest in the middle of nowhere? Had it all been a dream? This anecdote is one of many fieldwork experiences that could illustrate this point about unlikely encounters and friendships formed during participation in contemporary Shugendô mountain training practices.

CHAPTER THREE

TATEISHI'S ECO-PILGRIMAGE AS ENGAGED CIVIC PEDAGOGY

I. Introduction: Gathering at Nature's Home

On 3 April 2011 at six A.M., two hundred lay participants from diverse backgrounds gathered at "Nature's Home" in Oguchi, Wakayama prefecture (south of Kyoto). They came for an introductory bout of mountain austerities to honor the souls of individuals who perished in the 11 March 2011 earthquake and tsunami in Tôhoku. Donning white ascetics' robes stamped with "Hail Kumano Avatar" (南無熊能権現 *Namu Kumano Gongen*), the mixed-gender and all-ages group came from the length and breadth of the archipelago. They walked a sixteen-kilometer course along the Nakahechi trail, a former Imperial pilgrimage route used extensively since the 10th century. Local non-profit *Kumano Produce Sports* promoted the gathering as an "Event to Experience Shugendô on the 'Real' Kumano Pilgrimage Route."[96] Their title invokes the Kansai dialect and potency of a physical encounter with Shugendô in the centuries' old pilgrimage trail.

An estimated fifteen million annual visitors walk the Kumano Pilgrimage Route and related sites since their designation as World Heritage properties in 2004.[97] Most Japanese exposed to mass media recognize these UNESCO branded sites even if they have never visited them. Though located in a remote area far from population centers, this route and associated sites and practices occupy a central place in Japanese religious and cultural history (Moerman 2005:5-24).[98]

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[96] 熊能古道ホンマモン修験道体験 *Kumano Kodô Honmamon Shugendô Taiken*. Eyewitness description and photos of the event provided by Imaizumi Eiko during a Skype interview in June 2011.

[97] Source: http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1142. Accessed 4 February 2013.

[98] Visit the Tanabe City Kumano Tourism Board homepage for a sense of the Kumano Kodô's enduring vitality and how its sites are promoted to modern tourist-pilgrims: http://www.tb-kumano.jp/en/kumano-kodo. Accessed 4 February 2013.

Figure 3.1 Prayers to calm the souls of Tôhoku victims at Nachi Shrine.
Photo by Imaizumi Eiko, 2011. Used with permission.

Local mountain ascetic priest and environmental activist Tateishi Kôshô taught neophytes to chant the Heart Sutra punctuated by blasts of his and his devotees' conch shells during the event.[99] Rather than focus upon the sutra's content or meaning, Tateishi stressed its sonic dimensions. He further urged participants to observe how chanting affected them emotionally while walking the trail (Tateishi, personal communication by Skype, June 2011). East German ex-pat and Shingu resident Alena Eckelmann described her experiences walking the Nakahechi trail:

> In the mountains, while walking the trails, I am trying to open up to the energy and atmosphere around me and take it in. The natural environment is cleaner than in or around Tokyo. I feel that walking in this unpolluted environment cleans me too. I sweat a lot while walking—this cleans out the toxic waste from my body. The energy

[99] Tateishi's background and innovative practices are discussed on pp. 55-70.

> around me, from the trees, rocks, creeks, and waterfalls is positive. It cleans my heart. Getting clear in my mind is always difficult though. At the beginning of the walk and at times throughout the "chatter box" is on telling me this and that, which is not related at all to my being and doing at this very moment. It seems so artificial, out of place and utterly unnecessary. I am trying to switch this inner voice off by concentrating on what is around me—the colors, the smells, the sounds, and the textures of the natural environment (Personal communication by email, May 2012).[100]

Eckelmann came to Shugendô via the martial art Aikido. Her description of the benefits from practice—fresh air, a calm mind, spiritual energy and lovely scenery—are echoed by hikers and practitioners of other Japanese contemplative disciplines. Eckelmann traces the route she took to performing shugyô at Tateishi's training site Sangakurin (山学林 *Forest of Mountain Learning*) as follows.[101]

> I think I noticed the word shugyô first in a book about Morihei Ueshiba, the founder of Aikido. He did shugyô and misogi [禊 ritual ablutions] in the mountains. Something resonated and I looked it up straightaway and by doing so came across Shugendô. Spiritual practice in the mountains felt like the right path for me. As a child I walked a lot in nature and read a lot about indigenous cultures and how their people are in close touch with nature and the spiritual world. During my 20s and 30s I pushed this back in my mind as I thought that I needed to focus on building a career and a social position and all that. However, this "memory" from childhood has always been there and I suppose this is what drew me back to shugyô when I read the Aikido books. I am a DOING person having trained in Aikido and Taiko drumming (Personal communication by email, May 2012).

For Eckelmann, the Kumano path she treads weekly is both itself and a metaphor for the spiritual path she pursues. It is also a space to interrogate societal expectations for career success internalized over decades of productive work that left her unfulfilled. No longer content with

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[100] Eckelmann emailed these responses to my questions about shugyô from an express train bound from Kyoto to Yamagata during Golden Week (May) 2012.

[101] "Mountain Training Temple" may be a more technically correct translation of Sangakurin, following the Buddhist tradition of building training temples known as gakurin 学林 in natural landscapes. I opted for the poetic translation "Forest of Mountain Learning" to evoke the swaying cedars surrounding Tateishi's site and emphasis upon practice in the forested mountain.

reading books about spiritual matters or others' experiences, Eckelmann now strives to live that experience in her daily life.

> Shugyô is everywhere and everything we are doing. Cooking healthy meals for myself and my partner is shugyô. Helping Kôshô with the rice fields is shugyô. Putting seeds in the soil and attending the growing plants is shugyô. This is how shugyô in the mountains has come into my daily life in Kumano. Ascetic practice seems to lead to a healthier body, mind and soul. Walking difficult mountain trails is such a practice but also leading an ascetic daily life seems to be beneficial for the well-being of body, mind and spirit. By ascetic life I mean that I am not depending on money and not wasting resources. If I cook myself and use local ingredients than this costs much less than buying convenient food or eating out, what I used to do in Tokyo. I hardly ever cooked in Tokyo but now I have realized the joy that comes from MINDFUL cooking and the bond that a delicious meal creates between me and my partner when we sit down and eat it together. He appreciates my effort and I appreciate his praise. This is like walking in nature. I appreciate what is around me and the environment appreciates me walking the trails (Personal communication by email, May 2012).

Eckelmann's responses reveal some reasons why contemporary lay practitioners pursue shugyô and what it means to them. Her equation of shugyô with everyday activities like gardening, cooking, and frugal use of resources is common among contemporary Shugendô practitioners and priests. This expression of the unity of practice and everyday life within a non-dualistic worldview (不二 *funi,* literally "not two") is found in Shugendô but also Japanese Buddhist schools generally. Japanese Sôtô Zen master Dôgen Kigen (1200-1253) expressed it perhaps most memorably: "The everyday life of the Buddhas and patriarchs is nothing but drinking tea and eating rice" (Ôkubo 1969-1976:183).[102] Eckelmann absorbed these insights while doing Aikidô, Taiko drumming and now Shugendô.

In addition to the mental and spiritual dimensions of the Nakuhechi trail recounted by Eckelmann, physical agility and endurance to negotiate the unevenly spaced granite steps is also

[102] This statement concludes the treatise *Kajô* 家常 (*Everyday Activity*) in Dôgen's collected works 道元禅師全集 *Dôgen Zenji zenshû* (English Translation in Dumoulin 1990:95). For more about Dôgen's life and writings, see Dumoulin 1990: 51-119.

required. One must continuously ascend or descend sharply angled, slippery stones. Rare are those stretches of relatively flat and dry terrain. The overall pace set by Tateishi is brisk and occasionally punishing for those unaccustomed to walking long distances over unpaved and uneven terrain (Imaizumi, personal communication by Skype, September 2011). Though he does not demand strict adherence to traditional precepts, Tateishi cuts no one any slack on the trail. His attitude toward those who lose their way, are injured or quit is that they should have come only when they had sufficient strength to complete the course. Eckelmann's quote in the epigraph about nature's indifference to suffering and human weakness attests to this dimension of performing mountain shugyô.

This commemorative walk along the Nakahechi trail featured several training sites and practices from a more extensive regimen Tateishi devised for short-term guests at his training site. The typical program features sixty hours of minimal water consumption and abstention from food, hard labor maintaining the trails and weeding rice fields, visits to the sites of former illegal dumping grounds and gravel production, and producing household items from bamboo that participants take home as souvenirs. Among the sites visited is the restorative Slide to Rebirth.[103] Tateishi shows participants photographs of the waterfall pool (imagined as the mother's womb) when filled with abandoned car parts. This practice is a creative update of more formal Shugendô training practices such as the Lotus Ascent wherein participants perform austerities and pray to spirits of vanquished warriors or other divinities enshrined at various sites along a highly choreographed circuit. Sensing, perhaps, that visiting remediated natural sites and learning the narratives associated with their violation and subsequent purification would have a greater impact upon novice ascetics than the standard fare of disquieted samurai, Tateishi has assembled a binder filled with newspaper clippings, letters, petitions and photographs

[103] Discussed on pp. 62-70.

documenting successful resistance and remediation efforts since 1995 that curious visitors are encouraged to browse during free time at the temple.

While doing shugyô along the Nakahechi trail, participants contemplate Kumano's lush flora, fauna, rivers, streams and waterfalls as well as their own interior landscapes. Concerns for family, friends, neighbors and fellow citizens whose lives had been turned upside down and shaken by the force of the 9.0 scale earthquake and aftershocks in Tôhoku were palpable in the spring of 2011 (Imaizumi, personal communication by Skype, September 2011; Eckelmann, personal communication by email, May 2012). Japan's main island of Honshu had shifted eight feet eastward since the first trembling of its tectonic plates mere weeks prior.[104] Estimates of the dead and missing crept upward toward 20,000 (now confirmed at 15,467 dead and 7,482 missing as I write this chapter) as orphaned children and elderly in northeastern communities passed uncertain evenings outdoors or in makeshift shelters under falling snow (Japan Police Agency 2011:1).[105] New cracks appeared daily in the rosy assurances of safety and security of the nation's nuclear reactors as radioactive iodine was found in Tokyo's drinking water, and radioactive cesium in produce, dairy and fish from Ibaraki, Miyagi, Tochigi and Fukushima prefectures (Marran 2011:2).[106] Facing up to the most severe challenges since the Second World War, participants traversed the Kumano trail with uncertainty about their collective future.

Though millions visit Kumano each year, only a few hundred annual visitors find their way to Tateishi's training site to purify and "know their heart-minds" (心を知る *kokoro o shiru*). What brings them to Kumano and how they integrate the experience of shugyô in daily

[104] Harper's Index, *Harper's,* May 2011. Apparently this plate movement released energy equivalent to the annual capacity of the US power grid.

[105] The Japan Police Agency's White Paper, "Special Report 1: Police Activities and the Great East Japan Earthquake" is available at www.npa.go.jp. See the JNPA's Fukushima archives here: http://www.npa.go.jp/archive/keibi/biki/index.htm. Accessed 9 January 2012.

[106] Iodine-131 and cesium-137.

life is a chief concern of this chapter. I present seven individuals and describe their encounters with what Tateishi calls "another World Heritage"—an eco-pilgrimage to the sites of formerly degraded natural sites. I present an analytical framework informed by Amamiya Karin's reflections on the hardship of life (行き辛さ *ikizurasa*) and Anne Allison's conceptions of "ordinary refugeeism" in post-bubble Japan and Henri Giroux's notion of engaged civic pedagogy to analyze Tateishi's eco-pilgrimage. I ask what deep needs Tateishi addresses and suggest reasons for his resonance with a global cohort of practitioners. Finally, Tateishi and his affiliates' resistance, remediation and commemoration efforts are situated against the backdrop of Japan's environmental history and citizens' movements launched in response to industrial pollution.

Figure 3.2 Tateishi's sunset address on 3 April 2011 at Nachi Falls.
Photo by Imaizumi Eiko, 2011. Used with permission.

II. Integrating capacity of shugyô

A. Imaizumi: feeling at home in nature

Imaizumi Eiko, a forty-something cultural worker, has been learning to play the conch shell with Tateishi during monthly lessons in a park near her Tokyo apartment since 2010. Imaizumi expressed her surprise and delight with how many participants joined the Kumano Kodô event. Most uninformed people, she assumed, would associate the mountain practices with a religious cult and consider participation too dangerous. Imaizumi was also pleased when exhausted fellow pilgrims requested she play her conch to energize the group. It was the first time she had played her instrument for anyone. Imaizumi also expressed the meaning and benefits of her participation.

> I feel myself at "home," where I can relax, feel safe, and at the same time, [be in] a place where I meet "myself," a self I had never known or met, but didn't want to face. (…) Being with the mountains, rivers, waterfalls, air, and sky, praying and playing the conch fulfills me emotionally, mentally and makes me realize that after all, I am part of this universe (Personal correspondence, 2011).

Other motivations along a spectrum of the mundane and otherworldly also inspire mountain shugyô by diverse, urban lay participants: escape from boredom, sense of homecoming and rejuvenation in nature, combining austerities with a soak in Kumano's hot springs, and curiosity about UNESCO World Heritage are found at the lighter end. At the heavier end, joblessness, depression, inability to settle down and move forward in life, lack of fulfillment in career and family life, substance abuse, infertility, anxiety and trauma are some of the most commonly reported motivations (Personal communication by various Shugendô participants, 2002-3, 2007-12, Yoshino, Shingu, Tokyo and Osaka).

Participants' goals are not always explicit or transparent, however, even to themselves. Some come looking for a chance to reconnect with nature, for spiritual and practical guidance,

for friendship and conversation, for assurances in whatever form available that they will hit upon the means of participating in social and economic life. Some have clear objectives—that is, to dislodge blockages in the flow of their lives and/or offer gratitude for the intercession of powerful deities in their lives. Though none may articulate it in these terms, the crises many of them face stem from the complex interplay of personal life circumstances, societal dividing practices, and the low-grade anxiety and turmoil accompanying the dwindling prospects for future happiness, satiety, and well-being that is becoming more commonplace in contemporary Japan.

Shut out from any means of obtaining full-time, secure employment or the means to participate fully in economic and political life, increasingly younger and younger Japanese simply opt of education, training and employment rather than face the prospects of disappointment many feel will be their lot even after decades of hard work, study and sacrifice. These renunciates, like Melville's Bartleby the Scrivener, respond to pressures to conform in the neo-liberal climate with a calm refusal: "I would prefer not to."

To be clear, opting out of employment, education and social life in contemporary Japan is not simply a reaction to a material crisis. Though the lack of a steady paycheck and inability to buy a home and raise a family are realities for more and more of Japan's precariat labor force, their more profound crises are of an existential, social and emotional nature (Allison 2012; Amamiya and Kayano 2008). Activist and public intellectual Amamiya Karin watched from the sidelines as classmates entered the workforce during the Lost Decade(s). Amamiya insists that "the hardship of life" (行き辛さ *ikizurasa*) experienced by freeters, NEET, and irregular, contract workers (非正規社員 *hiseikishain*) results from the lack of 1) human relationships (人間関係 *ningenkankei*), 2) affiliation (所属 *shozoku*), 3) recognition and acceptance by others

(承認 *shônin*), and 4) a place they can call home (居場所 ibasho) (Amamiya and Kayano 2008:x).

Anthropologist Anne Allison characterizes the condition where "the staples of good living" (lifelong jobs and a middle class lifestyle) are unobtainable for more and more Japanese as a state of "ordinary refugeeism" (2012:345). A pervading sense of rootlessness results from this "evisceration of social ties, connectedness with others, and a sense of security (Allison 2012:345). Examining these crises through the lens of "Post-Ford affect," Allison suggests that "social precarity" (in contrast to material precarity) is experienced as pain and longing for what most still assume is "ordinary" (Allison 2012:345). In the portraits of contemporary Shugendô practitioners below I show how participation in a community of like-minded seekers, some of whom self-identify as "Tokyo refugees" (東京難民 *Tokyo nanmin*) but not necessarily Shugendô practitioners, provides fulfillment, affiliation, recognition and belonging in a place they can call home at Tateishi's *Forest of Mountain Learning.* In a striking parallel to Tateishi's repurposed training site in depopulated rural Kumano, Allison's fieldwork takes her to rural drop-in centers (触れ合いの居場所 *fureai no ibasho*) and "regional living rooms" (地域の茶の間 *chiiki no chanoma*) established in ramshackle homes left vacant when industry and agriculture were abandoned .[107] Where there is affordable rent, productive land and needs to fill, spaces of hope spring up.

"Where nothing exists," says Kawada Keiko, the founder of a regional living room in Niigata called "My Home" (内の実家 *uchi no jikka*), start it yourself!" (Allison 2012:365). As at Tateishi's place, all are welcome at "My Home" and no distinctions are made between "those caring and those being cared for" (Allison 2012:365). Comparing a Shugendô temple to a

[107] Apparently there are 200 such spaces across Japan (Allison 2012:365).

community drop-in center may seem like a stretch, but the confluence of risk factors, unfulfilled needs and untapped potential of visitors are more similar than one might expect. Volunteer career and counseling services are often available at drop-in centers and regional living rooms (Allison 2012:365). Similarly, Tateishi counsels the unemployed, restructured company employees and failing business owners who hope their fortunes will improve after a bout of shugyô. A ramen shop owner in Shingu was apparently in such despair that, "You could taste it in his noodles" (麺に出てくる *men ni detekuru*) (Tateishi, personal communication, July 2007, Shingu). Tateishi here makes a pun on the common expression, "You can see it on their face" (面に出てくる *men ni detekuru*). Noodles (麺) and face (面) are homonyms pronounced "men." He also reveals how the two men first met (lunch).

Young women, who comprise the fastest growing demographic of Shugendô practitioners in the contemporary period, have a particularly difficult time finding their place in the post-bubble Japanese work force. Employers, often conservative older males, are reluctant to offer stable employment and a chance at upward mobility assuming young women will (or should) marry and raise a family in fulfillment of their natural and cultural purpose rather than pursue careers. Women at more advanced stages of their career in Japanese firms, including Western executives such as Eckelmann, have found employment but lack job security and never obtain mobility on par with male counterparts. Informed by patriarchal gender ideologies of this nature, priests such as Takahashi Shirô of the National Shintô Shrine Association has called for eliminating government support of daycare facilities on the grounds that liberating women will cause breakdown of the family (Takahashi 2003:4 cited in Hardacre 2004:243). But as Hardacre reminds us, even if conservatives like Takahashi were able to prevent women's advancement in Japanese society, there is no guarantee that the plummeting birth rate would recover or women

would accept responsibility for the care of elderly parents (2004:246). Nor would such measures address underlying problems arising from labor restructuring, male unemployment, under-employment, mandatory unpaid overtime and rising suicide rates (Hardacre 2004:246). To tackle such systemic failures would mean a direct confrontation with Japan's dwindling birth rate, rapidly graying population, insufficient full-time worker replacement rate to fund the national pension system, overly restrictive immigration policies and inequalities associated with economic globalization.[108]

Career service volunteers like Kawada, activist intellectuals like Amamiya, Shugendô priests like Tateishi and their affiliates are part of a growing movement to confront these systemic failures and fill the void left by government and industry. Each offers a unique perspective and diverse life experiences to help clients and guests find their own path toward recovery. The similarities of their analyses, target groups and deep needs they address with their interventions are noteworthy. Tateishi, for his part, has created a welcoming yet challenging space for disaffected urban practitioners to work through their hardships and reflect upon intertwined systemic and existential causes.

At times the practices themselves create new hardships of a physical nature that must first be overcome before addressing psychic concerns. This appears to be by design. Imaizumi confided her initial frustration with waking early, fasting, and embarking upon solitary walks in the mountains near Tateishi's training site.

> I hated it at first - why I am here? It's only five in the morning? I had NO breakfast! I am hungry! Why am I doing this? What if I slip and fall? What if I cannot make it? What if I get lost? My leg hurts! What if, what if, what if…All these "thoughts" passed through me as I walked. Then I got so tired, and came to a point where I

[108] This is a complex and important subject deserving greater reflection than I can give here. Karen Kelsky has written a rich account of Japanese women who employ Western culture as a mirror to critique their own society that addresses socio-economic and existential crises in contemporary Japan (2001).

> couldn't talk or think anything – but I kept walking because I had to get back. Then later, I realized how I was concentrating so much that I was there "at the moment" every step I took to walk the mountain and adjusting myself to "myself" asking, "Is this my current limit or not?" Then it wasn't so difficult to walk anymore (Personal communication by Skype, September 2011).

Through further reflection and careful placement of each footfall along the path, Imaizumi realized that attachments to and anxieties about anticipated future outcomes prevented her from fully living in and appreciating the present. Rather than pursue a life of her own choosing based upon her interests and values, Imaizumi expressed regret about having grown anxious and reactive to external stressors such as, "Will I still have a job in six months?" or "What will coworkers and my boss think?" As she relates a breakthrough pushing beyond her physical and mental limits, we glimpse how this learning is applied in daily life in Tokyo.

> I was always worried or complaining about the future – what MIGHT happen, and didn't pay attention so much to what is happening there "at the moment." I was always looking ahead, trying to prepare for what might come up, which is important, but without looking at what is down there where I stand. No wonder I slip or fall! When I look back on my life, that outlined pretty much how I live in the city – I always worried about time, what people might think, what might happen, what if I did this, and that and it made me stressed out all the time. (...) But by experiencing it with my body—in physical motion—it made me realize more clearly how I have been (Personal communication by Skype, September 2011).

In having reluctantly accepted the lifestyle of the flexible and risk-taking individual in today's precarious workforce, Imaizumi seems to have developed a set of effective coping strategies for dealing with her life's uncertainty. These new ways of being in the world, however, came with an unwelcome degree of stress, distraction, lack of contentment and over-concern with others' perceptions and judgments. Imaizumi's embodied experiences doing shugyô at Sangakurin have helped her gain appreciation for nature and her place in it. In Amamiya's idiom, she has found her home (ibasho) in nature, as well as a renewed sense of spontaneity, relaxation, ease and enjoyment. These capacities enable her to recalibrate life-work balance and the relationship

between her body and mind while not permitting anxiety about the future to prevent her from enjoying the present.

Imaizumi indicated she had no intentions to leave her job or life in Tokyo. Her participation in occasional bouts of shugyô at Tateishi's training site permit her to cope with the inevitable stress and attendant health problems arising from life in the metropolis. In this sense, her experiences mirror those of Western yoga practitioners profiled by anthropologist Sarah Strauss in her 2005 monograph *Positioning Yoga*. Karen, a women's shelter staff member in Beyreuth, Germany, accepts the inevitability of stress in her life but strives to alleviate it and accompanying health problems through yogic "self-realization" practices (Strauss 2005:19). This way Karen can keep her job that helps her pay the rent for her comfortable apartment and the cost of attending annual yoga retreats in India. According to Strauss's interpretation of yoga as an "individual or personal strategy for living under the conditions of modernity," to "realize" the self is to "recognize the complete freedom of the mind" and thereby "unleash the extraordinary potential of the healthy body" (2005:19). Readers may recall Imaizumi's statement above about her encounter on the trail with "a self [she] had never known or met, but didn't want to face." Like Karen in Beyreuth, she appears to be on the path toward self-realization and freedom.

B. Okada: struggling to stay human

Twenty-six year old Okada Taiko told me the story of why she quit her job in the Tokyo film industry and set out walking on the Kumano trail in 2007. An innkeeper (a defrocked Shingon priest from Tokyo who organizes wilderness adventure tours) encouraged her to find Tateishi's temple and stop for a night's rest. In conversation with Tateishi and fellow visitors, Okada revealed why she suffered an existential and physical crisis in her climate controlled office tower. As she sliced steamed tofu one morning in the kitchen, Okada explained that none of her Tokyo colleagues or supervisors greeted her in the morning or evening. In the heat of summer,

she shivered. In winter, she could not stop sweating. She sought guidance from a friend, only to be told, "Everyone's just busy, don't worry about it" (Okada, personal communication, July 2007, Shingu). This well-intentioned attempt at reassurance provoked further anxiety.

> Even though I despised how most people around me simply endured this kind of thing by shrugging it off, I promised myself not to become this way. Instead *I struggled to stay human,* but eventually it got to the point where I could no longer maintain my balance. I quit my job. (…) When I collapsed due to exhaustion, it was pretty rough. Spiritually and psychologically I was shattered. My body hurt all over, I couldn't sleep, I lost my spark. But having this happen–I guess I can say it gave me a totally transformed perspective on what I was doing and in what direction the world was moving (Okada, personal communication, July 2007, Shingu).

As with Eckelmann and Imaizumi, Okada had a job in her chosen field, but the social and professional milieu in which she worked proved uninspiring. Because she knew she could always be let go, she never felt secure or let her guard down. Employer demands upon her time and energy permitted limited time for a social life. She eventually abandoned cultural, artistic and musical activities that had formerly been the source of happiness over many years. She lost the ability to cultivate diverse interests to become a balanced human being. Having appeared in a sense to have "made it" with her film industry job and apartment in Tokyo, few friends or relatives were sympathetic to her profound alienation. "Of course it's cold in your office in summer," a friend responded. "It's air conditioned!" (Okada, personal communication, July 2007, Tokyo) This made Okada's physical and psychological breakdown all the more troubling. Why could she not just be content with her success?

Unlike Imaizumi but similar to Eckelmann, Okada decided she could no longer cope with her life in Tokyo and needed a period of rest and recovery in a rural setting. Okada was still in her process of recovery when she visited Tateishi's temple. She participated in an eco-pilgrimage to the site of forty-seven waterfalls and stayed at the temple for one week. I observed her gradually relax and begin to share the story of her breakdown after swimming in a pristine

river, weeding rice fields and chatting with Tateishi and fellow guests each day. Following her interactions with Tateishi and other visitors, Okada embarked upon a journey to other recognized sites of sacred power and inspiring nature from Kansai to Hokkaido. After breaking her arm climbing a mountain on Japan's northern island, she resolved to return to her native province (Nagano) to work at a mountaineering lodge. Okada eventually bought a proper pair of walking shoes to replace the Converse Chuck Taylor All Stars the innkeeper had given her. Apparently she left Tokyo with only a pair of sandals to walk the Kumano trail.

Since 2007 I have received several postcards from Okada expressing her satisfaction with her new job and life in the mountains and congratulating me on the births of my children. Okada wrote that she enjoyed being a mentor for lodge visitors who have, as she did, temporarily lost their way. Once or twice a year she returns to Tateishi's temple and reconnects with him and other friends she made there. Okada subsequently spent the 2012 ski season in British Columbia honing her tele-marking skills. She visited my family in Montreal in the summer of 2012 before departure for New Zealand to work for one year as a cafeteria cook in a national park. I mention her various adventure travels within and outside Japan to show that Okada's integration of mountain learning is not strictly bound within a religious or spiritual frame.

She seldom invokes Shugendô or its teachings as the key to her recovery but does express gratitude to Tateishi and other guests at Sangakurin for helping her sort things out. Echoing one of the posted rules at the Niigata "regional living room" cited above, Sangakurin guests ostensibly present to receive care from Tateishi are capable of offering it to fellow guests. Often busy with outside commitments, Tateishi frequently departs the temple for up to a week at a time. His guests therefore typically spend more time in each other's company than his. This, too, appears by design. When arranging a visit to Sangakurin one seldom knows in advance whether Tateishi will be there. From what I have observed, however, the possibility of his absence is not

likely to discourage visitors as there are often interesting people to meet and join in daily activities.

For Okada, personal freedom, self-discovery, giving and receiving mentorship, mobility and cultural exploration are what give her purpose. Finding herself repeatedly in rugged mountain settings to carry out her newfound vocation seems to characterize Okada's integration of experiences doing austerities at Tateishi's training site. These possibilities only became available after her initial trip to Kumano. When I asked her what she gained from the experience of walking in nature, Okada replied,

> When surrounded by nature I have a powerful sense of what it is to be human. It's a simple way of being. I return to a wonderful sensation of being neutral (personal communication, July 2007, Shingu).

I have heard numerous pilgrims over the years describe this sensation of rejuvenation and rebirth as "becoming neutral," "being reset," or "returning to zero." Though a simple concept, its profundity and value is revealed in the embodied experience of it as truth.

The cumulative sense of loss and longing for affiliation, belonging, home, recognition and acceptance by others—the staples of middle class living discussed by Allison and Amamiya above—can be debilitating. Okada's description of her physical and spiritual breakdown is evidence of this. And yet the situation is never as bleak as one might think. There are alternative pathways and communities where one can find a sense of home (ibasho). Okada eventually quit her job, left Tokyo, walked the Kumano trail, traveled and worked abroad and more or less recovered from her previous condition. Content with her new episodic nomadism and the discoveries and friendships she has made, Okada nevertheless returns periodically to the mountains of Nagano and Kumano to return to neutral.

C. Yuki: sit on a stone for three years

Okada is not the only visitor to Sangakurin to have regained her spark after shugyô and a period of international travel. Tateishi regularly advises travel and study abroad to disaffected young people. My stay at Sangakurin in 2007 coincided with a return visit by a disillusioned former Aum Shinrikyô member who did a year of shugyô after the Tokyo subway sarin gas attack in 1995. Over cups of saké following a relaxed family meal at Tateishi's home, Yuki (now in his late 30s) reminisced about his experiences a dozen years earlier. Tateishi recalled advice he gave the young man prior to his departure for India upon completion of his shugyô and agricultural labor to fund his trip: "Sit on a stone for three years and it will eventually warm up."[109] When pressed for clarification, Tateishi remarked—

> This proverb teaches us that unless you are determined to experience life in the real world for three years, you will never see the way the world truly is. Working part-time jobs, coasting through life like a "freeter." That's not what I mean by the real world. One must be disciplined and focused on achieving one thing. If your goal is saving a million yen, then you'll do it. You may continue working or instead go traveling. The choice is yours (Personal communication, July 2007, Shingu).

Though in certain respects a counter-cultural figure, Tateishi tempers his more radical discourse and lifestyle choices with bits of commonsense wisdom even very young Japanese have heard from parents and grandparents. I detect a streak of conservatism in his critique of part-time, contract workers and freeters despite Tateishi himself having lived abroad as a young squatter in the East Village and busker on the streets of Middle Eastern capitals in his twenties. This was during a time when secure employment and the ordinary attainments of a middle class lifestyle would have been available to him had Tateishi remained in Japan. For youth in today's Japan, precarious contract work is often the best they can hope for.

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[109] 石の上に三年 "*Ishi no ue ni sannen.*" Literally, "Three years on a rock," this idiomatic phrase (諺 *kotowaza*) exhorts perseverance to get desired results.

A fifteen-year-old school refuser (不登校 *futôkô*) who spent nine months doing shugyô at Sangakurin is now learning English and playing rugby in New Zealand (Tateishi, personal communication by Skype, June 2012). After departing Sangakurin, the young man found a part-time job and worked out an agreement with his parents to share costs of his airfare. Though he apparently abhorred the bullying he witnessed against classmates that ultimately made him abandon middle school life in Japan, this young man is now flourishing in his new school, home and family life in New Zealand after nearly a year of shugyô in Kumano.

As participants' statements and experiences demonstrate, breakthroughs made during brief bouts of mountain practice at Sangakurin open up new possibilities, experiences and insights that transform individuals' life course, career trajectory and ways of being in the world. In Tateishi's terms, his ascetic retreats permit novices a rare opportunity for self-reflection aimed at generating greater self-awareness and self-knowledge, the fruits of which can be positively transformative for the individual, society and our planet. Tateishi guides participants to remediated natural sites as a way for individuals who have grown cynical or apathetic to "see beyond the horizon of the given" and imagine alternative futures (Giroux 2005:178). These are futures with gainful employment, social mobility, a place s/he can call home and assurances that government and industry will not pollute and destroy fragile ecosystems. By providing stewardship of Kumano's mythic and natural landscape and a space for the acquisition and performance of civic skills and self-knowledge, Tateishi ensures the health and vitality of future generations of mountain ascetics, hikers, and local residents. Embodied knowledge performed in the space of the Kumano landscape becomes transformative, propelling individuals toward a path of authentic agency. Despite such profound changes having occurred in part from their engagement with mountain shugyô, participants interviewed at Sangakurin and elsewhere

seldom mention a strong affiliation with Shugendô or attribute these salutary outcomes to having adhered to hallmark teachings (Sekimori 2009:62-3).

Figure 3.3 Praying before a remediated waterfall (Keyaki ga hara), 2007.

III. Sites of healing and transformation

A. Resistance, remediation, commemoration

For Tateishi, central to his project of protecting and maintaining his tradition is the fierce stewardship of his local natural environment and protection of his community's health and safety. Tateishi first underscored this vocation during a walk we took together along the eco-pilgrimage route in 2003. Pointing to a riverbank encased in concrete and a former mountain peak smashed into gravel for highway construction, he pointedly asked, "Is this World Heritage?" (Personal communication, July 2003, Shingu). Rather than accept the ironies of pilgrims trekking across ancient pilgrimage routes that are now paved interstate highways or

dumping grounds for construction waste and scrapped vehicles, Tateishi has sought to reclaim these spaces and narrate the story of their violation and remediation.

Tateishi and his allies fought against toxic disposal of household construction waste from the Kobe-Hanshin earthquake (1995) on health and safety grounds, not aesthetic or religious ones. A 50,000 Tatami mat mountain a short distance's walk from Sangakurin became the focus of their campaign. Tatami mats (畳), woven from rice straw and used as flooring in traditional Japanese homes, are sprayed with fossil-fuel derived pesticides and fertilizers in monocultural rice paddy production. With the introduction of industrials fillers like Styrofoam inserted between the mat's layers, these formerly biodegradable construction materials can no longer be safely or fully composted once their useful life is over. The chemicals leech into groundwater and cause health problems for local residents, especially the elderly and pregnant women.

Though Tateishi did not wish to make waves in his adopted home and already faced pressure to cease blowing his conch shell after several neighbors' noise complaints, he organized an informal information session with a neighbor and friend named Amano. Each attendee at their first gathering was tasked in turn with gathering signatures for a petition and further details about the extent of the operations. Once they reached a modest critical mass, the group of friends and neighbors decided to present their petition to the local landowner and public officials who were permitting the toxic waste disposal. When the local public office and landowner both ignored their formal demands, Tateishi and his allies and friends felt deflated. Some time later, when the group made contact with and helped pressure national print and broadcast media to expose the problem, however, they soon received more respectful attention and offers of assistance from local officials (Tateishi, personal communication, July 2007, Shingu).

Tateishi justified his participation on the grounds of being a Shugendô priest and

protector of the natural and sacred landscape.

> Incredible isn't it? It was as if the kami and the Kumano gongen requested my help. I'm a Shugendô devotee, so for me it's the same as doing mountain austerities. It's my job. This is my calling (Personal communication, July 2007, Shingu).

He also explained how he understood what he was doing with the eco-pilgrimage.

> When finishing a job like this, instead of simply saying, "Thank you!" or "Whew, glad that's over." We should instead acknowledge that an amazing thing has happened here. With everyone's strength we stopped it. So the real meaning is that it's an Eco-pilgrimage, a kind of alternative World Heritage (もう一つの世界遺産 *mô hitotsu no sekai isan*). We should return throughout the year to visit natural sites once destroyed now being revived and link them with these important memories. That's our responsibility (Tateishi, personal communication, July 2007, Shingu).

A young couple who relocated from Tokyo to Kumano in 2007 to raise a family in what they perceived as a healthy and safe rural community were dismayed by what they learned during the eco-pilgrimage. The wife (Aiko) gave this explanation for why she decided to move to Kumano:

> For ten years I worked in a Tokyo hospital. Working from morning to night, the stress piled up. I wanted to try a life where I could smell the earth. I wanted to eat nourishing foods and grow them, too (Personal communication, July 2007, Shingu).

Aiko met her husband Kazu at a school in Chiba where they teach aspiring urban agrarians how to tend rice fields. We filmed their participation in the eco-pilgrimage while they were still on their honeymoon. Aiko and Kazu subsequently established their household, planted a garden, transplanted rice seedlings and began to participate more actively in efforts to protect the sanctity and safety of the local environment in their new home. I received a letter and photos of their new life in Kumano when I mailed them a copy of our DVD in 2010. One of the images was of Aiko and Kazu smiling before the Slide to Rebirth waterfall at Keyaki ga hara. Their daily life now includes regular shugyô along the Kumano path while participating in prayer gatherings such as the Tôhoku event.

B. Narratives of space and religious experience

The new founding myths of Tateishi's Forest of Mountain Learning feature Osaka gangsters, dumping operations carried out under cover of night and the heroic triumphs of local farmers who rallied around Tateishi to reclaim and purify the land. Dramatic "before and after" photographs and the machinery used to haul away rusting and rotting debris are also found in his scrapbook "Stop the Tatami"—a chartered helicopter, backhoes, dump trucks and many helping hands. Shugendô's patron deity Fudô-myô-ô and legendary founder En no Gyôja also make appearances in these narratives, but they never overshadow the efforts of the local farmer or school lunch lady who labored to remove the garbage. The stories associated with the eco-pilgrimage can be viewed as a modern update of founding myths from Kumano's more storied shrines and temples contained in the twelfth century *Shozan engi*. Tateishi's eco-pilgrimage combines ascetic trials, environmental education and have helped more than one man regain his health after open-heart surgery.

Participation in the eco-pilgrimage also offers opportunities for individuals to insert themselves into the narrative by joining the on-going struggle against shortsighted development schemes and illicit dumping raids that have contributed to Kumano's environmental and health crises. This comprises an effort to create and sustain a vibrant and viable public sphere, albeit in an unexpected place—the rural context of a creatively re-imagined ascetic training grounds. Tateishi challenges participants to engage with spirituality as well as ecology and politics. Urban guests may not have known exactly what lay in store for them prior to departure for Tateishi's training site. But they return home, pace Giroux, with the requisite skills, capacities and knowledge that will enable them to perform as "autonomous political agents" who believe such struggles are "worth taking up" (Giroux 2005:177).

Figure 3.4 Archival photo from Tateishi Kôshô's "Stop the Tatami" scrapbook, 1995. Used with permission.

In the time and space of Tateishi's eco-pilgrimages, participants like Okada, Imaizumi and Eckelmann reported "breakthrough" moments whereby they begin to articulate previously inchoate feelings and identify possible sources of their anxiety, alienation and lack of fulfillment in the company of empathetic companions. This recalls what Tateishi characterizes as his *creation of a space for self-knowledge*. Participants can draw confidence from ascetic trials

attempted and completed. They do so in the company of new acquaintances and friends who become a supportive community.

"If I can make it through this grueling weekend, pushing myself beyond what I thought I could achieve (and all the while not thinking of drugs, drink, sex or frustrations arising from everyday struggles)," some have realized, they can then take what they learn back from the mountain to their homes. Far from being an escape or retreat from participants' problems and dilemmas in the "real world," the eco-pilgrimage provides welcome opportunities to confront conflicts. The inspiring natural landscape, mythic backdrop and ritual narrative structure provide not only reassurance but also a concrete method and theoretical framework for making sense of the experience. Through a modern adaptation of traditional ascetic trials and training grounds, Tateishi accomplishes similar tasks and draws from a shared store of myth and symbolism that Kumano guides have used for centuries in captivating pilgrims and local residents with exciting stories about cosmic or local divinities, revered warriors and other standouts.

Over time, participants develop their own versions of his stories about the Tatami mountain or the junked Land Cruiser in the bed of a waterfall, and disseminate them among each new class of newcomers. I have heard participants describe having caught a glimpse of Fudô-myô-ô in a waterfall or felt his reassuring presence near the end of an exhausting climb. Such narratives bear a striking similarity to iconic representations in Edo woodblock prints of Mongaku encouraged by Fudô during his penance at Nachi falls. Often the stories involve "rare" sightings of wild animals such as foxes, boars or bears. For these urban guests, breathable air and clear night skies filled with glimmering stars nearly constitute a religious experience. Tateishi also suggests a method for sustaining this level of awareness by encouraging urban and suburban residents to seek out green spaces in their densely populated communities. Peak experiences can thus take place in the home context when pilgrims are unable to return to the

mountain. In effect, Tateishi provides practical strategies for integration embedded within a non-dualistic worldview. Just as boundaries are broken down between practice and everyday life, so, too, are those separating mountain shugyô and home shugyô. Gains in self-realization and physical health are integrated in daily life.

It is not unusual for Tateishi's adepts to pursue more self-sufficient, low-impact lifestyles, seek employment with community organizations or further involve themselves in social and ecological justice efforts at work or home. Tateishi's efforts suggest the role of narrative as an embodied and experiential epistemology. Within the context of his eco-pilgrimage we see examples of his strategies for pilgrims to implicate themselves in stories about the transformation of formerly degraded sites. Reaffirming what I wrote above, Tateishi conceives of his project as providing a space for pilgrims to acquire self-knowledge, an appreciation for the interconnectedness of human beings and nature, and basic knowledge about and skills for civic engagement that have atrophied but which, according to Jeff Kingston, are getting a workout once more in twenty-first century Japan (2004:306-313). Tateishi and his students' efforts also demonstrate that Shugendô is alive and relevant today.

IV. Renewing civic courage

A. Creating and sustaining the public sphere

> The struggle over politics and democracy is inextricably linked to creating and sustaining public spheres where individuals can be engaged as political agents equipped with the skills, capacities, and knowledge they need not only to actually perform as autonomous political agents, but also to believe that such struggles are worth taking up (Giroux 2005:177).[110]

In a recent essay titled "When Hope Is Subversive," progressive pedagogy theorist and cultural critic Henry Giroux presents a working definition and clarion call for an engaged civic

[110] Giroux takes inspiration from Theodor Adorno's 1966 radio address "*Pädagogik nach Auschwitz*" ("Education After Auschwitz") (Adorno 1998).

pedagogy. He characterizes this civic engagement as the practice of "educated hope" defined as "the precondition for individual and social struggle, involving the ongoing practice of critical education in a wide variety of sites and the renewal of civic courage among citizens who wish to address social problems" (Giroux 2005:177). More than mere optimism, positive thinking, or faith in the intercession of a higher power, educated hope demands engaged struggle and is, in Giroux's estimation, a "subversive force" (2005:178). In this section I analyze Tateishi's eco-pilgrimage as an example of critical education and renewal of civic courage in a setting most associate with withdrawal and retreat.

At first glance, Giroux's formulations may appear unrelated to Tateishi's activities at the Forest of Mountain Learning. Giroux's insights provide provocation and reminder of the primacy of public spheres as sites for authentic engagement, whether that engagement take the form of civic, social, cultural or religious actions. Engagement in this way offers the genuine possibility of individual and collective transformation, but only if citizens create and sustain vibrant public spheres in which to do it. Such possibilities are foreclosed in most private or commercial sites (shopping malls or other retail outlets, for example, and increasingly on campuses) where the primary mode of participation is as consumers (Kohn 2001:71). Margaret Kohn was one of the first to point out the necessity of securing public spaces lest hard-fought civil liberties and human rights be rendered moot in the absence of appropriate arenas to exercise them. In an era with chicken-wired "free speech zones," police "kettling" operations and use of weapons of war by democratic governments against citizens exercising guaranteed civil liberties, one cannot overstate the importance of preserving every last remaining square inch of the public sphere.[111]

[111] During recent protests over proposed tuition hikes and special legislation curtailing public dissent (Law 78) during Quebec's *Printemps d'èrable* (Maple Spring, 2012), Montréal

Figure 3.5 Stretching before eco-pilgrimage, Wakayama, 2007.

B. Significance of landscape as a source of religious value

Kohn's and Giroux's reminder that democratic struggles are inextricably linked to the creation and sustenance of vibrant public spheres illuminates a key aspect of of Tateishi's embodied pedagogy within the narrative and spatial frame of his eco-pilgrimage: *the significance of the landscape as a source of religious value.* Unless and until these degraded spaces of ascetic pilgrimage are restored to viable ecosystems, Tateishi argues, the value and meaning of carrying out austerities in the Shugendô tradition are severely compromised. Participants learn how to

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municipal police used tear gas, kettling operations and mass arrests against citizens in the Hochelaga-Maissonneuve and La Petite-Patrie-Rosement districts (where I live). I observed these activities first-hand. During one particularly active period in May 2012, police helicopters hovered over my neighborhood well past midnight over several consecutive evenings. See CBC Radio's coverage of Montreal police "kettling" citizens from 24 May 2012: http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/story/2012/05/24/montreal-arrests-kettling.html. Jeremie Battaglia documents Montreal citizens' creative and spontaneous responses to reclaim the public sphere in "Casseroles—Montréal 24 mai 2012." Available at: http://vimeo.com/42848523. Accessed 4 February 2013.

protect natural and sacred spaces where environmental degradation and exploitation is carried out within the boundaries of a national park, cultural treasure and World Heritage cultural landscape.

I wish to situate Giroux's insights about educated hope cultivated in the public sphere in the tension between, on the one hand, the foreground of political engagement and struggle to reclaim non-corporatized public spheres (often called "the commons"). And on the other hand, the backdrop of Japanese religious and social life, whose cultural and spiritual resonances conceive of the Japanese archipelago (and especially mountain landscapes like Kumano) as a source of religious value. Tateishi is a cosmopolitan religious specialist whose legitimacy is rooted in his intimate knowledge and protection of the local mythical and natural landscape over many decades of ascetic practices and maintenance of the pilgrimage trails. In my view, his development of a modern eco-pilgrimage weaves together civic engagement in the public sphere, safeguarding environmental and human health and conceptions of the land as a source of spiritual value. Protecting the sanctity of the Tantric Womb and commemorating local citizens' successful remediation campaign are important steps in an ongoing process to secure the safety and well being of many human wombs. This in turn ensures the birth of healthy children who will contribute to the future health and vitality of this rural community.

C. Japan's environmental history

Knowledge of Japan's particular social and religious history provides the best means for contextualizing Tateishi as steward of a particular mythic and natural landscape. Similarly, appreciation for Tateishi and his affiliates' environmental mediation efforts is enhanced by study of Japan's environmental movement and developments in civil society at certain watershed moments. The first wave of responses to the Minamata mercury poisoning case (1950s-1970s), citizens groups' volunteer activities after the Kobe-Hanshin earthquake (1995), reforms to NPO

registration laws (1998),[112] and promulgation of the Freedom of Information Act (1999)[113] are worth noting in this regard. The impacts of dumping construction waste and smashing mountains in ascetic training grounds in Kumano are part of a broader narrative of suffering, pain and death that results when toxins emblematic of civilization and modernity are deliberately released into the ecosystem and penetrate the permeable bodies of *homo sapiens industrialis* (Walker 2010:6-7).

Environmental historian Brett Walker describes a new breed of human created in the nineteenth century during the height of Japan's empire and nation-building activities that has been, "utterly penetrated, engulfed, and transformed, often at the molecular level, by the engineering, industrializing, and poisoning of the environment in and around it" (2010:6). He presents a sophisticated hybrid causation model to account for the "the aggregate, macro effect of many independent causal drivers" that inflicted pain and suffering upon Japanese bodies for various causes (2010:16-18). Demands for a cheap and reliable supply of domestic energy required coal for fuel and copper for wiring; bullets desperately needed for waging war against China called for zinc; ideal notions of feminine beauty inspired demands upon cadmium for use in cosmetics (Walker 2010:20). The satisfaction of each demand came with certain unanticipated consequences for the nation and the health of its natural and human communities.

Ecologist Linda Nash has observed that, "As humans have industrialized land, land, in turn, has industrialized them" (2006:210). Her work confirms the insight stressed by Shugendô

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[112] 特定非営利活動促進法 *Tokutei hieiri katsudô sokushin hô* ("Law to Promote Specified Nonprofit Activities"). Passed by the Diet in 1998 and enacted on 1 December 1998. Hardacre discusses the significance of the new law with respect to religious organizations who sought NPO status (2004:396-7). Kingston discusses success stories with NPOs and Judicial Reform (Kingston 2004:70-95).

[113] 行政機関の保有する情報の公開に関する法律 ("Law Concerning Access to Information Held by Administrative Organs"). Promulgated in 1999 and first enforced in 2001. On successful uses of freedom of information legislation by elected officials, media and citizens' groups, see Kingston 2004:42-69.

priests like Tateishi about the fundamental interconnectedness of all sentient beings. This realization is nowhere more poignant than in a mother's womb whose unborn child's umbilical cord is saturated by methyl-mercury and dioxin through the process of biomagnification (Steingraber 2001). A sinister corollary is that with increasing simplification through chemical and genetic engineering and the widespread practice of mono-cropping, it becomes easier for toxins to move through systems and find their ways into vulnerable bodies (Walker 2010:6). The pain that often results is thus a "biological indicator" of environmental toxicity (Walker 2010:6).

In natural areas with greater biodiversity (thus complexity), toxins move much more slowly through the system (Walker 2010:6). Human beings and other animal species are therefore far less susceptible to industrial poisoning and attendant pain and suffering. Tateishi's planting of diverse tree species in areas surrounded by monocultural cedar plantation forest and commitment to organic and sustainable farming can be seen as a modest attempt to safeguard the health and well being of his family, neighbors and by extension, all sentient beings within his ecosystem.

Walker tells the story of how methyl-mercury dumped into Minamata Bay by the Chisso Chemical Plant beginning in 1932 ascended successive trophic levels by the process of biomagnification. First, plankton in the bay and surrounding sea absorbed the mercury. Fish and shellfish ate the plankton and were in turn eaten by local residents. Eventually the mercury crossed the human placental line to poison fetuses in the womb. Children born at Minamata during the 1950s and 1960s whose mothers ate fish and shellfish from the bay suffered from the worst deformities ever seen in Japan. Often born blind, deaf, mute and insensate, these unfortunate children (whom Walker calls "mercury's offspring") struggle their whole lives with twisted, half-formed limbs and required constant care for the simplest tasks (Walker 2010:170).

In a recent article comparing the impacts and responses of government and industry to the

Minamata and Tôhoku tragedies, historian Timothy George invites readers to consider the mutual influences of human beings and nature on each other that create so-called "natural disasters" (George 2012:5). The evidence of human negligence, lack of oversight, corruption, cover-ups and refusal to obey the rule of law despite federal regulations and Supreme Court rulings ordering compensation and remediation at Minamata is especially thick (George 2012:2-4; Johnston 2006:4-7). This tragic archive includes Chisso company president Yoshioka Kiichi's public demonstration of an effluent filtration system (the "Cyclator") that he knew had no capacity to remove toxins from acetaldehyde production (Walker 2010:173). With no viable filtration system in place between 1930 and 1960, it is estimated that Chisso dumped between 224 and 600 tons of methyl-mercury into Minamata Bay (Walker 2010:174; George 2012:2).[114] It also includes Environment Minister Koike Yuriko deliberately ignoring a 2006 Supreme Court decision regarding expanded eligibility criteria and increased health care and disability payments for Minamata victims fifty years after the first victims went public ("New Allowance Planned for Minamata Victims," *Yomiuri Shimbun* 2006).

The Chisso Chemical plant's methyl-mercury poisoning case in Minamata is one of the best known but by no means the most devastating or sinister chapters in Japan's environmental history. False corporate and government promises of a technical fix by seemingly impressive but worthless gadgets were also given in the wake of large-scale mining disasters at Ashio and Kamioka. Tokyo's controversial mayor Ishihara Shintaro replicated Yoshioka's empty public relations gesture in 2011 by drinking a glass of municipal tap water to demonstrate that it did not contain dangerous levels of irradiation following the Tôhoku Triple Disaster (George 2012:2). Intimidation and physical violence was also used against Minamata residents who brought lawsuits against them (Walker 2010:173; Johnston 2006:2). LIFE magazine reporter Eugene

[114] Estimates vary widely depending on source and stake in this tragedy.

Smith, celebrated for images he made of "Minamata disease" victims, received a beating from Chisso company thugs that damaged his eyesight and forced him into early retirement (Johnston 2006:3). Tateishi and his neighbors also claim to have faced intimidation and physical threats by Osaka yakuza who worked in tandem with a local landowner during the illegal dumping of household waste (Tateishi, personal communication, July 2003, Shingu).

Rural communities like Minamata, Ashio, Kamioka and Kumano often lack viable strategies for employment and economic stimulation. They are therefore typically forced to sacrifice their natural and human resources "for the nation in a time of crisis" or for local economic stimulation (Walker 2010:6-7). Both justifications were given when Tateishi and his associates raised questions about the disposal of household debris from the Kobe-Hanshin earthquake in 1995.

D. Tateishi's activism in the context of citizens' movements

On the bright side, indefatigable and creative citizens' movements launched to bring justice to Minamata survivors and their families helped inaugurate the modern environmental movement in Japan in the 1960s and 1970s. These efforts took inspiration from the publication of Rachel Carson's seminal *Silent Spring,* which laid bare the damages of bio-magnification and persistence of chemical pesticides used in modern agriculture in soil, air and water (1962). Carson was the first to sound the alarm about dioxin in breast milk. Public outcry in the UK upon discovery of widespread birth deformities caused by the prescription fertility drug Thalidomide is also frequently cited as a source of inspiration for Japanese environmentalists like Tateishi (Personal communication, July 2003, Shingu). Tateishi came of age during this heady period of declining trust in government and industry and resultant social and ecological justice movements. His remediation of degraded environmental sites and creation of an eco-pilgrimage must be seen against the backdrop of grassroots movements that arose in response to

the suffering and degradation inflicted at Minamata and other prominent sites of industrial pollution in Japan and abroad in the 1960s and 1970s.

Press revelations of government ineptitude and collusion with industry and organized crime in the wake of the Kobe-Hanshin earthquake provoked further civic participation across the Kansai region. In their wake, reforms that relaxed registration, record-keeping and funding regulations for non-profit organizations (NPOs) in 1998 further released the power of citizens' movements. Tateishi and his supporters mounted a successful resistance and remediation campaign by drawing in part from memories and skills gained during the social ferment and ecological activism of the 1960s and 1970s. An earlier generation's civic participation was renewed and given a further shot in the arm in the 1990s. Tateishi's creation of and participation in prayer services and bouts of shugyô dedicated to soothing the souls of individuals who died in the Tôhoku Triple Disaster (2011) and critique of plans by Wakayama officials to accept shipments of irradiated soil excavated near the Fukushima Daichi plant locate this ascetic standout within key moments in Japan's history of environmental and citizens' movements.

Tateishi rejects the gesture of accepting irradiated soil as a case of wrongheaded solidarity with Tôhoku survivors and yet another case of sacrifice for the nation imposed from above. His critique echoes the words and actions of civil society groups and public officials at Minamata and Fukushima who insist there are alternatives to acceptance of Faustian deals to build chemical manufacturing facilities, copper mines and nuclear reactors to revitalize local economies. [115] Moreover, residents of these communities no longer remain silent when toxic chemicals are

[115] As of August 2011, 120,000 tons of irradiated soil and sludge has been stored temporarily in Tokyo while decisions are made about where to transport it for long-term storage. Wakayama officials have discussed possibilities of accepting irradiated materials from Fukushima (Mahr 2011). Mahr's article is available from *TIME* magazine's on-line edition (9 August 2011). Accessed 4 January 2012.

dumped into their air, water, soil and food supply. They use hard-won legislative reforms by forming NPOs and making freedom of information inquiries to force disclosure of projects that will affect their health, well-being and livelihood. Citizens also fight to ensure that regulations are enforced, remediation undertaken, and health care and livelihood assistance provided according to the judgments of courts of law (Johnston 2006:4). The ongoing struggle for adequate compensation for Minamata victims 50 years later attests to the necessity of long-term, creative strategies. Tateishi is all too familiar with this need for constant vigilance. He recently told me that a local metal scrapper has begun dumping unwanted car parts in previously remediated areas (Personal communication by Skype, June 2012). This is why he is working to groom the next generation to walk these trails, critically engage with the histories of these struggles and build the capacities and skills to participate anew.

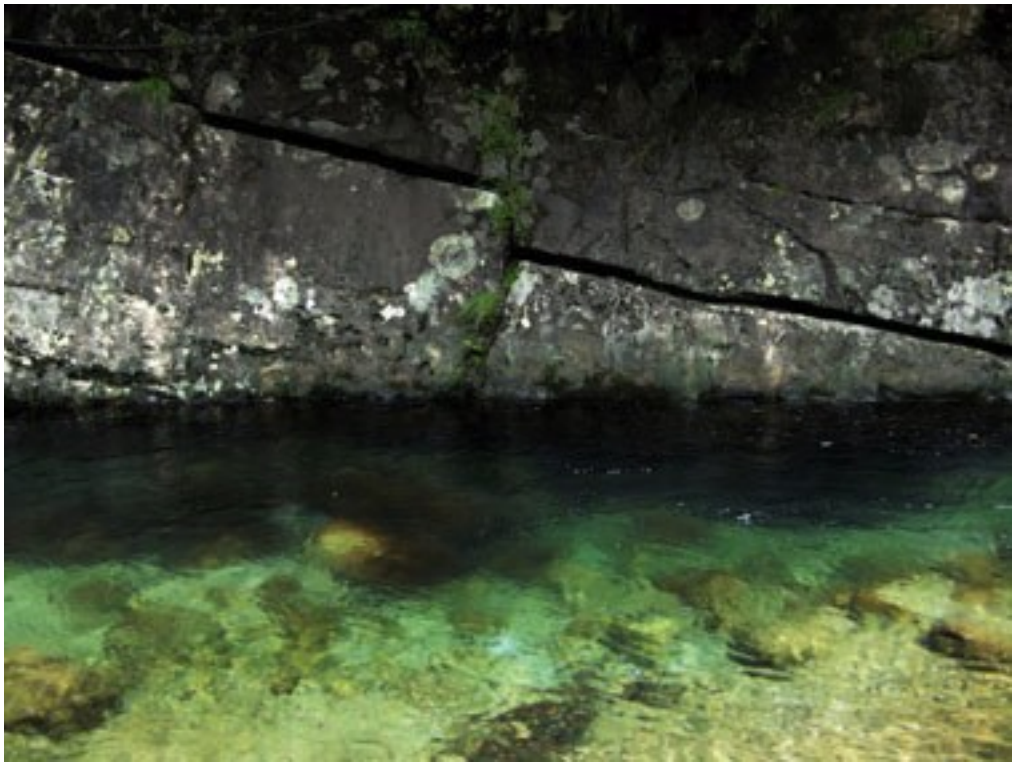

Figure 3.6. River, Oguchi. Photo by Jean-Marc Abela, 2007. Used with permission.

V. Conclusions: longing for a more humane society

At the beginning of this chapter I introduced a recent prayer service and bout of mountain ascetic practices organized by a non-profit organization and attended by two hundred ordinary Japanese citizens from all walks of life. Led by Tateishi Kôshô, this encounter with Shugendô practices offered a space for reflection and contemplation about how best to move forward in the wake of the 11 March 2011 earthquake, tsunami and nuclear meltdown. They prayed that citizens can count upon government and industry to share accurate information in a timely fashion, that it can put public safety ahead of stockholders' profits, and that life can resume some sense of normalcy despite the regular and legitimate warnings about the air, soil, water and food supply. They did so with the realization that it will take far more than prayer to ensure these conditions are met. It is these kinds of complex, real-world problems that participants confronted while doing shugyô

at Tateishi's Kumano training site. Participants' contemplation in and encounter with nature was undertaken to generate the capacity to transform their situation in a concrete and practical sense. And their experiences in the mountains can be applied to the building of a more vibrant civil society inspired by environmental and social movements launched after Minamata and the Kobe-Hanshin earthquake.

"The longing for a more humane society," according to Giroux, "…does not collapse into a retreat from the world, but emerges out of critical and practical engagements with present behaviors, institutional formations, and everyday practices" (2005:179). I have shown how Tateishi's ascetic retreats are best understood as evidence of a longing for and concrete implementation of a more humane and just society. Through an energetic and creative confrontation with anguish, pain and suffering (theirs and fellow citizens'), participants gain a critical education in the complexity of social, political and economic relations. In other words, Tateishi and his guests, "sustain the capacity to see the worst and offer more than that for our consideration" (Giroux 2005:179).

In the microcosm of Kumano's landscape, I have analyzed Tateishi's pedagogical and ascetic practices as a means for participants to learn about their potential as moral and civic agents (Giroux 2005:179). Sliding to Rebirth in a waterfall or swimming in an aquamarine river where toxic construction waste previously leeched dangerous chemicals into the water table, participants report having been inspired by Tateishi's environmental stewardship and feel compelled to offer assistance in his and others' ongoing efforts to preserve and protect fragile ecosystems. Such engagements have proven to be restorative and transformative in the lives of numerous participants.

CHAPTER FOUR

WHAT'S AT STAKE IN DESIGNATING JAPAN'S SACRED MOUNTAINS UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITES?

I. Introduction

In this chapter I assess the social, economic and environmental impacts of UNESCO World Heritage designation of Mount Ômine in Japan's Kii Peninsula (Mie, Wakayama and Nara prefectures). I focus upon a community of male monastic and lay ascetics who direct their principal energies toward performing mountain training rituals in the surrounding natural environment.[116] Though situated in an isolated location, this place and these practices became the subject of great regional, national and global interest after World Heritage designation by UNESCO (United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organization) in June 2004. Its ascetic training grounds and lush forests makes the Kii Peninsula an ideal candidate for UNESCO's "cultural landscape" category of World Heritage. Since 1992 UNESCO has recognized as cultural landscapes sites that combine its two prior categories of "natural" and "cultural" properties.[117]

Increasingly, organizations such as UNESCO and the World Wildlife Fund are realizing that the majority of the world's surviving healthy forests and mountain landscapes are those considered "sacred" by inhabitants. This has impressed upon these organizations the importance of

[116] "Natural environment" is an ambiguous referent requiring clarification. I follow Catherine Knight's definition: "environments such as wetlands, rivers or forests which support ecological systems of flora and fauna. Some areas may be partially or substantially modified (such as a river with concrete embankments) but still support significant biological diversity" (2010: n.1).

[117] See whc.unesco.org for a complete list of the criteria for natural and cultural properties pursuant to the 1972 World Heritage Convention, a current list of all World Heritage properties and the relevant UNESCO documents discussed below. Accessed 4 February 2013.

cultural factors in land conservation (Hay-Edie 2000:11).[118] Their recent efforts to protect sacred sites can be seen against a larger background of sustainability advocates collaborating with leaders of world religious traditions. Such partnerships combine strong roots in science and a concrete vision for a sustainable future with a broad grassroots presence to help shape the worldviews and lifestyles of large segments of the earth's population (Gardner 2002:5). UNESCO has mobilized this "sacredness-culture-biodiversity triptypch" (Hay-Edie 2000:10) in its promotion of projects such as the "Man [sic] and the Biosphere Program," "Proclamations of the Oral and Intangible Masterpieces of Humanity" (UNESCO 2001, 2002) and the cultural landscapes category of World Heritage. In this chapter I focus on cultural landscapes in a discussion of a Japanese sacred mountain.

During three summers of participant-observer fieldwork in the Kii Peninsula and interviews with staff at the Cultural Properties Research Center (Tokyo) and UNESCO (New York) I have tried to understand how UNESCO's idea of World Heritage interacts and sometimes collides with local and national Japanese understandings of self-identity, environmentalism, heritage preservation and tourism. Since formal interviews and even most casual conversation are inappropriate during Shugendô mountain training rituals, fellow participants extended invitations to visit their homes, workplaces and temples during three occurrences of the annual overnight Lotus Ascent of Mount Ômine（蓮花入峯 *Renge nyubu*) organized by Kinpusenji temple for lay participants. These follow-up visits took me to Okinawa, Kyûshû, Osaka, Wakayama, Tokyo and Hokkaidô, where participants showed me how they fit these austere mountain practices into their

[118] Murtiraja, who convened the "Regional seminar on the role of Sacred Groves for the Conservation and Management of Biological Diversity" at the Kerala Forestry Research Institute (KFRI) in India in December 1997, observed in north-east India during research on shifting cultivation and soil nutrient recycling that the only healthy forests left standing were sacred groves. The Kerala conference arose from efforts by UNESCO to secure allies in launching an initiative on sacred sites. (Hay-Edie 2000:11).

"normal" lives as TV producers, UNESCO employees, bankers, nightclub and cement company owners, day laborers, mountain guides, electricians, pastry chefs and temple priests. For a significant number of urban lay practitioners, World Heritage status of the region was a primary initial attraction and gateway into Shugendô. It also offered a culturally (even globally) recognized justification for their visit. Whereas no one interviewed mentioned to co-workers or neighbors they had done Shugendô, reporting they had visited a World Heritage site or presenting gifts from the region with the World Heritage trademark elicited approval and appreciation.

An overview of UNESCO's activities since its declaration of the World Heritage Convention in 1972 is provided in Part I. I argue UNESCO World Heritage designation practices in Japan can be best understood as a system for bestowing elite cultural prizes to stimulate sluggish tourist markets during the period of recession, zero-growth and social despair known as the "Lost Decade(s)" (1990s-present). This is in opposition to UNESCO's stated goals of protecting and safeguarding the cultural and natural "patrimony of humanity." In important ways the ironies and contradictions of UNESCO designation in Japan mirror well-documented gaps between stated ideals and legislative, political, budgetary and human resource realities of Japan's national parks, national treasures and cultural property systems. As critical scholars have demonstrated, since the Meiji period Japan's national park policy has a strong tendency toward tourism promotion and development over stewardship and conservation (Oyadomari 1985; Knight 2004, 2007 & 2010; McCormack 2001; Kingston 2005). Similarly, Japan's national treasure and cultural property system has prioritized the creation of an orthodox culture over safeguarding cultural assets and performance traditions (Law 1997; Thornbury 1997; Hafstein 2004; Oakes 2009; Loo 2007). Each system is discussed in turn but the chapter's focus is UNESCO World Heritage designation. In the final section, I describe how the campaign to designate the forested mountains and sacred training grounds of the Kii Peninsula has re-activated an ongoing controversy about what the Kinpusenji

lineage of Shugendô (headquartered in Yoshino, Nara prefecture) claims is a 1,300 year prohibition against women entering Mount Ômine's sacred peaks. The introduction of an imported, global notion of heritage has triggered reflection upon UNESCO's legitimacy, Japanese national identity, environmental impacts of mass tourism and the changing roles of women in Shugendô and Japanese society more generally.

II. UNESCO World Heritage

A. Global and Japanese contexts

Adopted in 1972 for the protection and preservation of precious natural and cultural sites, the World Heritage Convention of UNESCO has been ratified by 189 member states and inscribed 936 properties (725 cultural properties, 183 natural properties and 28 mixed "cultural landscapes") from 153 countries on the World Heritage List by May 2012.[119] These include such famous sites as the Great Wall of China, Yellowstone National Park and the ancient medina of Fez. Nominations for World Heritage designation require well-documented governmental commitment to protect a site in perpetuity, surveys of clear and undisputed boundaries and unambiguous arguments for the "outstanding uniqueness" of sites representing certain historical, aesthetic or scientific genres.

Though in its formative years UNESCO's World Heritage selections were largely informed by Western aesthetic notions favoring monumental architecture, national parks and predominantly Christian religious buildings ("tangible" heritage), in 1994 UNESCO revised its designation criteria to counterbalance its Euro-American bias and recognize new types of properties more representative of the cultures of the global South (Hay-Edie 2001:1; UNESCO 2001:3-4; Hafstein 2004:40-69). Designation of cultural landscapes and natural sacred sites such

[119] Source: http://whc.unesco.org/en/list. Accessed 4 February 2013.

as the Maori sacred volcanoes in New Zealand's Tongariro National Park (1993) and the rice terraces of the Phillipine Cordilleras (1995) followed from this initial corrective (Boukhari 2002:2). These adjustments, however, still left much of Africa, Oceania and to a lesser extent Asia and Latin America with far fewer sites than Europe and North America. The primary rationale for discrepancy is that countries in these regions lacked the finances and expertise to assemble applications for UNESCO nominations.

In 2001, UNESCO Secretary-General Matsuura Koichiro announced the "First Proclamation of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity" offering individual states lump sums up to $20,000 USD to prepare their applications. The Proclamation, Matsuura claimed, would further "fill in the map of cultural diversity" (UNESCO 2001:3) by including "intangible" heritage such as sacred and cultural spaces, ritual performance traditions and even prayer (UNESCO 2001:3-4). This new shift in emphasis toward intangible heritage bears the distinct imprint of the Japanese domestic cultural property legislation, which is no surprise considering that Japan is UNESCO's second largest financial backer behind the United States. Japan contributes approximately $ 82 million USD (7.9 million Yen) of a total budget of $653 million USD (12.5% overall) and sixty-six full-time staff members (third behind the US and France) for the biennium 2010-2011.[120] Japan further contributes several "Funds in Trust" toward education and capacity building in the global South with a focus on professional development activities for Asian heritage specialists.[121]

UNESCO's overall budget seems robust, but the World Heritage Center has only a $4 million USD annual operating budget (less than 1% of UNESCO's budget) with an additional $5

[120] Source: Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/culture/coop/unesco/outline.html. Accessed 4 February 2013.

[121] Ibid.

million USD in extra-budgetary resources.[122] World Heritage designation enhances a site's prestige and visibility in global networks, opening up possibilities for guidance and support from its fellow designees and funding from a variety of international agencies. After designation, though, ultimate responsibility for a site's conservation and preservation lies with the nominating state party. This helps explain why, for example, in the wake of the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, UNESCO officials could do little more than make fact-finding tours and impassioned pleas for the return of missing heritage artifacts following looting of the Baghdad National Museum. Failed states fall under the jurisdiction of occupying armies who have different mandates than safeguarding local cultural heritage (Deblauwe 2003:18-19; Davies 2003:5; Martin 2003:9).

With its limited means UNESCO seeks to empower states to make the most of the designation and not squander the salvific aura of World Heritage by a poorly conceived grab for tourist revenues. UNESCO recognizes that the temptation of tourist windfalls drives competition by some states to nominate as many sites as possible with no intention of providing adequate safeguards and protection. "Because there is no self-regulation," admits World Heritage Center Director Francesco Bandarin, "the problem is very difficult to resolve" (Boukhari 2002:2). Attempting to limit the lead taken by "heritage champions" such as Spain (thirty-six sites), Italy (thirty-five sites) and China (twenty-eight sites) at the turn of the twenty-first century, the World Heritage Committee resolved in 2003 to accept only one site per country in any given year (Boukhari 2002:2).

For the first twenty years after declaration of the World Heritage Convention, Japan did not seek nomination for a single site. Then, between 1993 and 2003, its Bureau of Cultural Affairs (文化庁 *Bunkachô*) secured World Heritage designations for eleven Japanese sites,

[122] Ibid.

including Hiroshima's Atomic Bomb Dome and Peace Park, Okinawa's Ryukyu castles (グスク *gusuku)* and Yakushima's ancient cryptomeria forests.[123] A twelfth area designated in June 2004, the sacred Kii mountain range, is the subject of this chapter. Between 2004 and 2012, four additional cultural and natural sites in Japan have been designated and twelve more sites appear on the "Tentative World Heritage" list, awaiting review.[124]

Nearly all of Japan's designations embody what Ron Engel calls UNESCO's emerging "global religious vision" in transmitting to future generations humanity's "universal values" (2004:193). Engel interprets "religious vision" to include perspectives symbolizing "creation, alienation and redemption" (2004:193), each of which can be seen in the Japanese sites. Prominent spokespeople from Shugendô communities in Nikkô and Yoshino have been quick to appropriate this discourse, placing their hopes in UNESCO for opportunities to reclaim religious heritage thrown out by Meiji ideologues or American Occupational forces.

B. Shugendô and World Heritage

There are particular historical, geopolitical, and structural reasons why Shugendô's institutions are nowhere near the size, strength and capacity of other religious organizations in post-war Japan. Nor has Shugendô's distinct history, culture and practices until recently attracted as much scholarly attention as other more established and well-traveled Japanese religious traditions like the Zen or Pure Land Buddhist schools.[125] Shugendô has known extended periods of patronage by elite and even imperial institutions so it cannot be considered an historically marginalized or liminal tradition (Tyler 1989; Moerman 1997 & 2004). But Shugendô as an institution was

[123] The Okinawan word *gusuku* is often glossed as "castle." When written in Japanese the katakana syllabary reserved for foreign words and onomatopoeia is used.

[124] For a complete list of and documents for Japan's World Heritage sites, see http://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/jp. Accessed 4 February 2013.

[125] The recent publication of proceedings from the 2009 Columbia Shugendô symposium is a welcome contribution (Faure, Sekimori and Moerman 2009).

abolished by official imperial decree in 1868 for being a "superstitious" amalgam of Buddhist, Daoist and "Shintô" ritual practices. The Meiji government expressly prohibited worship of its gongen. During the Meiji "dissociation of kami and buddhas" (神仏分離 *shimbutsu bunri*) the leadership of Shugendô and other combinatory traditions were given the choice of reformulating themselves as State Shintô priests, Buddhist priests or returning to lay life (Miyake 2001:12; Tanaka 2005:22). Kinpusenji's affiliation with the Tendai Mount Hiei temple complex helped it survive the oppression of Meiji.

Kinpusenji priest and spokesperson Tanaka Riten argues that the architects of State Shintô sought to create a "monotheistic tradition resembling Christianity" that would enable national unity and the acquisition of a global empire under the emperor as head priest (Personal communication, July 2007, Yoshino). Over time, Tanaka insists, this reckless policy proved to be "out of touch with daily realities of Japanese people," and devastating to the Japanese military, economy, society and environment (Personal communication, July 2007, Yoshino). Barbara Ambros' nuanced analysis of primary and secondary Meiji era sources from another sacred mountain (Ôyama in the Kantô plain) provides counterpoint to Tanaka's polemic. Ambros argues for a more ambivalent Meiji experience among Ôyama's various patrons, caretakers and pilgrims and cautions against assuming that the stated objectives and policies of State Shintô critiqued above were applied uniformly or with equal consistency (2009:239). Ambros also reveals how the Meiji state gave many institutions opportunities to operate independently and gain economic stability through local and regional partnerships such as the successful parish system established at Mount Ôyama (2009:239).

1. Clever mobilization of World Heritage by Kinpusenji's leadership

Kinpusenji's abbreviated ordinations and condensed mountain rituals for busy urban ascetics are but two examples example of the resourcefulness and flexibility of its priest-guides. Throughout its history, Shugendô's leaders have creatively reinvented the tradition in response to proscription, ideological attack and followers' changing needs. In 1995 Kinpusenji priests and local officials who are themselves practitioners started a clever campaign to secure UNESCO designation to imbue Mount Ômine with the aura of World Heritage. Culminating in the successful designation in June 2004, the comprehensive Kii Peninsula cultural landscape, which includes Mount Kôya, Nachi falls and the Kumano trail, commemorates a training route (the Okugake) that neither the Bureau of Cultural Affairs nor Nara Prefectural Government planned on designating as National or Prefectural Cultural Properties. Though complicated, their reasoning can be summarized as follows. First, there is insufficient evidence of the Okugake's existence as a contiguous pilgrimage trail dating back far enough in history. Second, Nara already has a surplus of National Treasures and World Heritage sites conveniently clustered in its ancient capital. Research to secure these designations had been costly and time consuming. Why should an overburdened bureaucratic staff undertake another campaign to designate an obscure pilgrimage trail in Nara's hinterlands?

So how did Kinpusenji's priests circumvent these obstacles? By collaborating with religious and bureaucratic administrators in Nara, Mie and Wakayama, Tanaka and his staff helped weave together a comprehensive three-for-one package deal (Mount Kôya, Nachi and the Kumano pilgrimage route encompassing Mount Ômine and the Okugake). This brilliant example of expedient means appealed to bureaucratic sensibilities, tapped Kumano's ritual history and imaginative sacred geography and took advantage of the serendipitous precedent of Santiago de Compostela (a joint designation between France and Spain) as the first pilgrimage trail

designated a World Heritage cultural landscape. In designating the Kii Peninsula as a World Heritage cultural landscape, the needs and values of local cosmology, rational bureaucracy and internationalization all came together. Where adequate historical evidence of the kind so valued by geographers, historians and civil servants was lacking, semi-legendary documents, chronicles, liturgical records and the founding narratives (縁起 *engi*) of shrines and temples were presented (ICOMOS 2004:34). The Okugake trail consists of little more than well-worn footpaths, ascetics' huts and local legends continuously embroidered and recounted by priest-guides and lay devotees.

In one noteworthy passage contained within the ICOMOS (International Committee on Monuments and Sites) committee survey entitled, "Documented Use of the Mountains," it is written that, "The nature and extent of the written archives is not detailed in the dossier, although the Kojiki, the Japan Record of Ancient Matters, and the Nihon Shoki, the Chronicle of Japan, compiled in the 8th Century are two key documents" (2004:34). As readers are well aware, *The Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki* are far from transparent historical documents. They were compiled with the expressed goal of lending legitimacy to the rule of the imperial family. In the absence of architectural evidence or mutually reinforcing historiographical evidence, it is noteworthy that a third party, non-governmental international committee (ICOMOS) accepted these contested quasi-historical sources as evidence for inclusion of the Okugake trail in the Kii Peninsula designation.[126]

National identity politics and the restoration of spiritual values, too, played prominent roles in the campaign. Recognition by UNESCO, according to Tanaka, would be a critical step toward reclaiming Japan's religious consciousness "discarded" by American Occupational forces'

[126] The quasi-historical chronicles and founding myths ICOMOS presented as supporting evidence for the Kii Peninsula designation are discussed on pp. 28, 66-67.

forceful separation of church and state (Personal communication, July 2003, Yoshino). Tanaka, who initiated the nomination, has stated his hope that UNESCO designation will boost Kumano residents' sense of regional identity and impress upon all Japanese the value of a formerly proscribed combinatory tradition's distinct religious heritage (Personal communication, July 2007, Yoshino).[127]

Figure 4.1 World Heritage campaign sign, Yoshino, 2002.

C. Questioning UNESCO's rhetoric

Prior to the Kii peninsula's designation as a World Heritage site, an active community-based campaign instilled pride of place and promoted keeping it clean and its festivals well attended. Other voices from within and outside the community discussed below, however, have questioned UNESCO's rhetoric of "promoting peace and security in the world through collaboration among

[127] Terence Hay-Edie's analysis of a Tibetan minority group in Dolpo, Nepal, finding opportunities for "new myth-making exercises in world heritage ordered space" illustrates a similar convergence between UNESCO and marginalized communities' interests in heritage protection. In both cases, claims for uniqueness and authenticity rest upon stewardship of sacred mountains (Hay-Edie 2001:3).

nations" while ostensibly appropriating Japan's sacred sites for a global consumer market.[128] Though UNESCO strives to help local and international organizations convert its ideals into effective "instruments for action" (Engel 2004:3), it is my view that Japan's World Heritage designations do not embody UNESCO's founding principles of protecting endangered sites in countries whose own governments cannot afford to do so, and is best understood as a system of bestowing elite cultural prizes. Why do Japan's World Heritage Sites such as the shrines and temples of Nara and Nikkô, sites recognized and protected by the domestic cultural property system for decades, require further protection by UNESCO? Nara has twenty-five national treasures, fifty-three cultural properties and was inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage list in 1998. Nikkô, with its nine national treasures and ninety-four important cultural assets, was designated as World Heritage in 1999. As any tourist can attest, you cannot walk down the street in Japan's historical heartland, whether in the tiniest hamlet or giant metropolis, without encountering signposts indicating the neighborhood's "important cultural property" or "national treasure."[129] Have sites such as Nara and Nikkô become World Heritage out of a concern that they are endangered or obscure? Or is it a strategy to distinguish them from a sea of ubiquitous "national treasures" and "important cultural properties" awaiting tourists on Japan's well-trodden travel networks?

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[128] Article 1 ("Purposes and Functions") of UNESCO's founding constitution adopted in London on 16 November 1945.

[129] Yamagata (Northeastern Japan) and the northern island of Hokkaidô are not saturated with cultural properties or national treasures. The Ainu have received an intangible cultural property designation for a folk dance form at Shiraoi, but none of their land has been designated as important cultural property or World Heritage. One could argue that designating an Ainu sacred landscape would make more sense than yet another World Heritage site in Nara. It would also provide political leverage and access to resources traditionally denied to this marginalized indigenous community. The particular political and historical processes by which certain communities' expressive cultures and sacred geographies have been written out of canonical chronicles is discussed below in connection with national treasures and domestic cultural property legislation.

1. A brief comparison with Japan's national park system

Critical scholars of Japan's national park system have made similar arguments that park policy has tended to prioritize tourism promotion and natural resource development over conservation and protection. Political scientist Oyadomari Motoko historicizes alliances between "pure," "moderate" and "utilitarian" preservationists and "economics-first" groups who lobbied policy makers during four key historical periods to show that overall park policy has favored use over preservation (1985). New Zealand based independent scholar and environmental policy consultant Catherine Knight provides fine-grained, multi-vocal, and bio-centric analyses of shifting policies toward and legislative decisions regarding conservation, habitat protection, tourism promotion and resource exploitation in Japan (Knight 2004, 2007, 2010). Knight signals that Japan is not alone among nations of similar geographic size and population density in its struggles to adequately protect its natural heritage (2010: para 2). Knight further suggests that despite many problems and contradictions, it is remarkable Japan has retained as much natural habitat as it has (2010: para 2). According to Knight, the three primary threats to Japan's wildlife and natural environments they inhabit are habitat loss and degradation, poorly controlled hunting and introduced species (2010: para 6 & 7). Habitat loss and degradation result from a failure to protect habitat and direct habitat destruction due to inadequate legislation and conservation management policies (2010: para 6 & 7).

Japan's 29 national parks constitute 5.9% of its total land, but these designated areas are not protected from "environmentally detrimental development" or human activity (Knight 2010:para 8). Only five areas totaling 5,631 hectares and 0.015% of total land area have been designated "wilderness areas" where "activities entailing adverse effects on ecosystems are strictly prohibited" (Knight 2010: para 9). An additional 95,000 hectares have been designated national or prefectural "conservation areas" in which human activities are limited but not

prohibited (Environment Agency 2000: vol. 2, 144 cited in Knight 2010:10).[130] Passage of the 1987 Resort Law, ostensibly created to provide affordable leisure space to harried office workers during the peak of economic prosperity, deliberately encouraged development of tourist facilities in national parks (McCormack 2001:87-88; Knight 2010 para 9). McCormack suggests the Resort Law evoked a "perceived need for relaxation and communion with the natural order" but in practice created a "bubble of speculation and corruption" that burst several years later (2001:88). Mountaintops were leveled and forests were cleared to make way for golf courses, ski resorts and luxury hotels that were left unfinished or abandoned after the bubble burst and corporate expense accounts and individual disposal income were slashed. I have personally observed several such abandoned and degraded sites while walking along the Kumano pilgrimage path near Shingu, Wakayama.

Challenges documented by Oyadomari, McCormack, Knight and the Environment Agency indicate that national park land is inadequately protected from unsustainably managed tourism, hunting, real estate development, natural resource exploitation and introduced species. Even where appropriately robust legislation is in place, overburdened and underfinanced park staff without proper training in wilderness or wildlife conservation cannot perform assigned research and conservation tasks. They must instead devote their time to mitigating damage caused by park visitors (Knight 2010:para 28). With this comparative data presented on the national park system, I return to UNESCO World Heritage.

[130] Japan's Environmental Agency is the predecessor to its Ministry of the Environment, discussed below.

2. High class heritage, one rank above national cultural properties

Harasawa Kenta, Secretary-General of UNESCO's Nikkô branch (Tochigi prefecture), critiques and praises its institutional practices. He personally oversaw designation of "The Shrines and Temples of Nikkô" in 1999. Harasawa likens World Heritage status to the Michelin Five Star Rating or the equivalent to conspicuous brand name goods like Luis Vuitton or Prada (2001:5) so fetishized in Japan and elsewhere. But what can you expect, Harasawa asks, when Nikkô has become "an attraction at a theme park" where tourists are unloaded momentarily to gaze upon sacred architecture, buy souvenirs and embark in haste toward their ultimate destination—a hot springs resort near Lake Chusenji (Harasawa 2001:6-7)? If visitors to Nikkô only come away with a handful of "Three Monkeys" key chains and the impression that Toshôgu Shrine's historical value lies chiefly in its distinction as Tokugawa Ieyasu's mausoleum, writes Harasawa, that would be an unfortunate victory for the shallow historical revisionism of conservatives (2001:6).[131]

Knowledgeable about UNESCO's activities since the 1972 World Heritage Convention, Harasawa perceives World Heritage status as having become simply one more rank on the cultural properties prestige hierarchy, above prefectural and nationally designated cultural properties. In the eyes of most tourists, World Heritage trumps national or prefectural property. But as discussed below, Harasawa also finds opportunities for pluralistic commemoration within UNESCO unavailable within the domestic national treasure and cultural property systems.

A research fellow at the Tokyo Cultural Properties Research Center who requested anonymity explained that important cultural properties are commonly said to stand in a lateral

[131] Harasawa refers to the famed "Mizaru, Iwazaru, Kikazaru" (見ざる言わざる聞かざる "See no Evil, Hear no Evil, Speak no Evil") monkeys carved in relief on Toshôgu's main façade.

relationship of equals. This is the official line (建前 *tatemae)*. Among local residents, however, rivalries arise regarding who was recognized first and whose site or practices conform closest to what has been established as the "original" form. In an effort to stand out from this crowd of "equals," some seek World Heritage designation to distinguish themselves from their colleagues.

National tourist campaigns and popular television programs in Japan have been quick to exploit World Heritage.[132] The resultant tourist deluge has made some sites more endangered than if they had never been designated World Heritage. This echoes the experiences recounted by Knight and McCormack at national parks. On tiny Yakushima island, for example, hordes of day-trippers have trampled the exposed roots of sacred cryptomeria trees, forcing caretakers to construct unsightly wooden rampways.

3. The solution to global armed conflict?

If one were to take the UNESCO "Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity" at face value, global armed conflict could be solved by nations joining together in appreciating each other's cultural heritage:

> That since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed; That ignorance of each other's ways and lives have been a common cause, throughout the history of mankind, of that suspicion and mistrust between peoples of the world through which their differences have all too often broken into war; (…) That the wide diffusion of culture, and the education of humanity for justice and liberty and peace are indispensable to the dignity of man and constitute a sacred duty which all the nations must fulfill in a spirit of mutual assistance and concern (UNESCO 1945).

Proclamations like this may stir emotions but they lack local knowledge, resources, legislative force and the ability to follow through on development plans. This results in an enormous gap

[132] NHK morning dramas in 2002 and 2003 had UNESCO World Heritage sites as their backdrops. "Sakura" was filmed using the famous thatched houses of Shirakawa-go. "Manten" featured the dramatic scenery of Yakushima's natural environment. Commemorative "goods" in both locations were stamped with their UNESCO pedigree.

between its flowery prose and the actual situation in designated communities. Until UNESCO maintains commitment to follow through in helping sites manage the after-effects of designation, there can be only minimal hope that UNESCO will make good on objectives suggested by the late Lithuanian writer and UNESCO ambassador Ugne Karvelis:

> At a time when we are calling for an authentic dialogue between civilizations, when we are fighting to maintain—in the context of globalization—cultural and linguistic diversity, of which the oral and intangible heritage is an essential component, the search for standards of protection for this type of heritage is essential (UNESCO 2001:19).

III. Whose heritage? UNESCO's ideals and local Japanese realities

The designation of Japan's Kii Peninsula is an illustrative case of the collision between UNESCO ideals and local realities. It is important that we ask fundamental questions about the nature of cultural heritage protection in both the UNESCO World Heritage and Japanese national treasure and cultural property systems. To whom do these cultural properties properly belong? What does it mean to "protect" and "preserve" cultural heritage? Who stands to inherit World Heritage? Does a UNESCO World Heritage site properly rank above a Japanese national or prefectural designation? These questions are not complicated, just generally neglected.

Rather than seek out heritage that is actually endangered, or decidedly "folkloristic," that is, representative of marginalized groups (as per UNESCO's 1994 revised criteria), Japan's World Heritage designations have been for sites already designated and protected by domestic legislation. National recognition is a prerequisite.[133] Perhaps the reason Nara officials balked when first approached with the idea of nominating the Kii Peninsula was that they saw no legitimate need to proceed with World Heritage nomination and designation. Kinpusenji temple

[133] This is not unique to Japan. Other UNESCO signatories also typically nominate elite sites with worldwide name recognition. I discuss more recent nominations of relatively obscure sites and marginalized groups' expressive culture more in keeping with the spirit of protecting endangered intangible cultural properties (UNESCO 2001, 2002) on p. 184.

and Mount Ômine's ascetic training grounds had already been designated as nationally protected treasures and a national park. But we must still ask why priests at Kinpusenji considered it necessary to appeal to UNESCO for additional recognition and support. I have argued above that Japan's UNESCO designations signal that the aura of World Heritage, in terms of stimulating tourism and pilgrimage (the two are inseparable), surpasses that of important national culture property and national treasure status. The situation, however, is slightly more complicated than that. The move to secure World Heritage designation also reveals that Japan's domestic cultural property and national park legislation is incapable of safeguarding the Kii Peninsula's natural and cultural heritage. As critical scholars of the national park systems have argued, claiming natural spaces for the nation was an effort to stimulate tourism, not protect fragile ecosystems. Similarly, the architects of the national treasure and cultural property systems sought to create consensus around an orthodox national culture. I next discuss critical scholarship on Japan's domestic cultural property system to provide another perspective on World Heritage.

A. Cultural property system as mechanism to create orthodox culture

Beginning in the 1920s a dedicated group of Japanese folklorists, theater historians and other academics, aided in their efforts by well-known novelists' populating their works with itinerant puppeteers and other sacred specialists and entertainers, brought the folk performing arts into the national cultural spotlight. The Asia Pacific War and subsequent Occupation period derailed their efforts for a time, but enthusiasts and scholars rededicated themselves during the post-war period to revive interest in the folk performing arts. The results of their efforts, the adoption of the Cultural Properties Protection Law, were celebrated in the mass media in 1976, when Japan's Ministries of Culture and Transportation announced their first selection of nationally designated "important intangible folk cultural properties" (国指定重要無形民族文化財 *Kuni shite jûyô*

mukei minzoku bunkazai) (Thornbury 1997:157-167).[134] Individuals and performance traditions so designated receive modest economic assistance and legally protected status.

Though seldom mentioned, the vast majority of individual performers and performance traditions recognized by these annual designations have come from outcast and untouchable communities (部落民 *burakumin*). There is something uncanny about former outcast performers and sacred specialists, long despised as "non-humans" (非人 *hinin*), suddenly designated as "important intangible folk cultural properties" and engaged as civil servants. Held up as depositories of Japanese cultural heritage ("Whose heritage?" one might reasonably ask), they perform on national stages and represent Japan during performance tours abroad. But what is the alternative to these folk performing arts being granted cultural property status? Would it be preferable that the traditions were lost altogether so that performers could die in dignified oblivion and poverty? How do performers feel about their recently gained fame and economic independence? Do they recognize themselves and their traditions when performing for bureaucrats and foreign dignitaries, or is it alienating for them to participate in this revival and suturing of the seams of the grand narrative of history?

Jane Marie Law, in her 1997 study of Awaji ritual puppetry, one of the performance traditions recognized as an important intangible cultural property in the first selections in 1976, offers insights into the mixed reactions of puppeteers and community members. We learn about what was lost in the conversation about Awaji's revival: namely, any mention of the stigma of being a descendant of a puppeteer and the ambivalence many individuals felt about their past. Many performers themselves had contributed to efforts to kill off the tradition in the hopes that if it went away, so would the pain and discrimination. The designation leapfrogged any attempt to

[134] A complete list of all 195 designations made between 1976 and 1995 appears in Thornbury 1997:157-167.

deal with these real issues of pain, poverty and discrimination. Law focuses upon these painful memories as a "lens through which this tradition is constructed" and thereby seeks an understanding of the question, "What creative and even healing process was being served by this 'painful longing' for the past and by the effort to retrieve what was rapidly vanishing?" (1997:10). In contrast to Law's efforts to understand Awaji puppeteers, the national government opted to fossilize this remembrance in the past and not allow it to bear upon present realities.

For many puppeteers, the money and recognition may be what serves as their main motivation. Why should they not be? Puppeteers no longer have to feel ashamed of their heritage as performers and can actually earn a living by doing what they are good at. Law points out that we ought not be so quick to assume, as some scholars of nostalgic discourse have, that the irony of these former outcasts suddenly being given esteemed position squarely within the grand narrative of Japanese history is lost on the performers and members of their rural communities. It may be less satisfying than having the historical truth laid bare *and* getting to keep the notoriety and economic security their status as folk cultural property has bought them. But then again, why would they want to dredge up all those painful memories? Their children can now make a living as performers (rather than yakuza or Pachinko parlor owners), and have the experience of traveling abroad. Cultural property legislation also stimulated domestic travel when the Ministry of Tourism launched several large-scale publicity campaigns urging domestic tourists to return to traditional "exotic" Japan.[135] In many cases this meant visiting the sacred locales associated with the folk performing arts designated as "intangible cultural properties."

[135] Posters appearing in train stations throughout Japan at the time featured prominently the word "Exotic" (エキゾチック *ekizochikku*) transcribed from English using a phoneticized script (katakana*)* reserved for foreign loanwords. See Ivy 1988.

Such campaigns, while suggesting Japanese reclaim those regions that are particularly imbued with "Japanese-ness," have at the same time made Japan seem other to itself.[136]

I have seen reverberations of this exoticism and fetishization within popular depictions of Shugendô practice. There is a growing appetite (conventional and social media) for information about the more esoteric aspects of Shugendô.[137] Authors and photojournalists play to the audience's desire for something otherworldly and dangerous. The clothing, ritual implements and their symbolism are given prominent display in glossy photos; the extremity of the ascetic trials rather than the state of mind practitioners cultivate gets emphasized. Other voices in the revival of Shugendô have been producing counter-discourses of practice for world peace, ecological preservation and conscientious worship of deities who have provided continuous blessings.

Any understanding of the current revival and popularization of Shugendô asceticism must be understood with an eye trained on issues springing from the inner psychic drama of individual practitioners as well as the background of the socio-historical factors such as the cultural property legislation and domestic travel campaigns discussed in this chapter. In doing so, one gains a greater sense of the movements spearheaded by Japanese arbiters of culture and travel to contain the marginality of sacred specialists within cultural safety deposit boxes. Figures such as itinerant puppeteers and yamabushi comprise a "ritually and semantically separate group of people" who take responsibility for managing the world of the unknown (pollution, chaos, death, the sacred) (Law 1997:59). They formed one layer of a pariah group isolated physically and

[136] A brief note on the socio-historical context of the mid 1980s: there had been several prominent murders and disappearances of young Japanese women traveling abroad. The "Exotic Japan" campaign implicitly suggested retreat to the rural to curb risky travel abroad. A similar promotion of domestic travel by transport providers and travel agencies has taken place in the United States following the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks. Outdoor gear provider L.L. Bean pushed its signature monogrammed suitcases for traveling "back home."

[137] I review contemporary Shugendô promotional media on pp. 82-88, 93-100.

symbolically. Their very otherness has made it possible for Japanese society at large to maintain its "vision of purity and order" (Law 1997:59). In positing a grand narrative of the shared cultural assumptions of "we Japanese," they have attempted to cover up the tattered seams of what has increasingly been shown to be hotly contested ideologies.

Recent scholarship in the field of Japanese religious history has argued against a singularity of experience in Japanese popular religious life. Their authors ask us to read Japanese history as radically heterogeneous and speak against powerful voices both within and outside Japan who have crafted a singular Japanese identity. Law asks what "tattered seams" get concealed in this "grand narrative" or unity of experience? An older generation of scholars of Japanese religion who have stressed a continuity of consciousness, geography and time in Japanese religious experience (in the singular) blur difference and leave out persons and data that do not fit with their grand narrative.[138]

The domestic cultural property system has a marked tendency toward claiming former outcaste performer's expressive culture for the nation. Folklorists, tour operators and arbiters of culture have sought to create rural Japan and its marginalized communities as exotic repositories of "Japanese-ness" and a past that never was. Having discussed these interconnected processes, I now return to the discussion of related practices within World Heritage branded spaces.

B. Is this World Heritage?

Japan's Bureau of Cultural Affairs typically focuses on discrete sites and objects and not the ways individual communities manage the spaces in between. This is as true in Kyoto (Tung 2001:372-382) as in rural Kii Peninsula. While individual sites are protected, the overall environmental scene in the region is often degraded. During fieldwork in 2003 and 2007 near Shingu (Wakayama

[138] Yanagita Kunio, Hori Ichiro and Joseph Kitagawa are three whom Law takes to task (1997:14).

prefecture), my host Tateishi Kôshô, a Shugendô priest ordained at Kinpusenji operating an independent training temple there, gave me a tour of sites where former sacred peaks have been smashed into gravel by road construction outfits managed by yakuza-owned corporations. The yakuza bought the land at preferential rates under the pretense of starting dairy farms and amusement parks. In another nearby site 50,000 tatami mats gathered from the debris of the 1995 Kobe Awaji earthquake were illegally dumped into a ravine, creating a thirty meter high "tatami mountain."

Figure 4.2 Tatami mountain remediation efforts, Shingu, 1995.
Photo by Tateishi Kôshô. Used with Permission.

Not only was this dumpsite an eyesore and obstruction, high concentrations of pesticides in the mats contaminated soil and groundwater (*Shûkan Asahi* 1995). Nearby, junked cars protruding from a sacred waterfall were removed by helicopter (*Nankishû shinbun* 1996). Tateishi asked, "How can Shugendo practitioners perform ritual ablutions in a waterfall with a car sunk to the bottom?" Tateishi has been successful working with local public officials, television and print media to raise awareness of Wakayama's environmental problems. In 1996 the tatami mountain

was relocated to a legal dumpsite; by 1998 Tateishi and several local residents drove into bankruptcy three corporations' gravel production ventures (McGuire 2004:1768). There remain remnants of rusted metal still to be removed.[139]

Tateishi considers tunnel construction and road widening another serious local problem. The construction industry makes large profits and transforms formerly functional, fragile ecosystem into what Tateishi considers "concrete nightmares" (コンクリートの悪夢 *conkuri-to no akumu*). The concretization of Japan's countryside by the "construction state" (土建国家 *doken kokka*) is an alarming trend within Japanese environmental circles (McCormack 2001:25-77; Kingston 2005:123-146) and religious communities whose priests and followers derive spiritual potency from mountain austerities. Tunnels and paved roads are cutting broad swaths through former ascetic training grounds, knocking down trees and disrupting wildlife habitats. On several stretches along the path tread during the Lotus Ascent of Mount Ômine, practitioners walk along paved roads that did not exist two decades prior. It is noteworthy that Japanese road infrastructure increased by 40 percent in area and 80 percent in length during the 1980s and 1990s (OECD 2002:135 cited in Knight 2010 para 15). Of these compromised environmental sites in remote mountain training sites, Tateishi asked me repeatedly, "Is *this* World Heritage?" The ironies of prefectural governments celebrating Kumano's natural and cultural heritage while subsidizing construction of an ambitious road network connecting the Kii peninsula with the Kansai region are not lost on Tateishi.[140]

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[139] Tateishi illustrates this story with archival photos and a visit to the formerly degraded sites in the documentary *Shugendô Now* (Abela and McGuire 2009:41m50s-47m30s).

[140] See *Kippo News* 2001. The article describes a government meeting in Yoshinoyama in May, 2001, in which Mie, Nara and Wakayama officials agreed to strengthen a cooperative relationship to promote development of the region in the following four areas: 1) construction of highways, 2) preservation of forests, 3) development of tourist resources, and 4) development of cultural heritage and research on culture. Representatives from the three prefectures lamented the

1. Designated cultural properties receive minimal assistance

It is generally assumed that once designated by the Japanese domestic cultural property system, communities receive a substantial government stipend. In fact, unless nationally designated as an important cultural property, funding is only available to cover half the costs of officially sanctioned repairs and basic upkeep. Folk properties, despite generally being even more marginalized and endangered, receive less than 200,000 Yen annually (USD $2,000). UNESCO's expressed intent, however, is to give increasing priority to these kinds of endangered "folkloristic" performance spaces and practices (UNESCO 2001:3). In most regions of the world this seems to hold true. The Japanese designations, however, do not conform to this expressed objective. In its first two proclamations, UNESCO has designated the Noh theater and Kyôgen (UNESCO 2001) and Ningyô Jôruri Bunraku (UNESCO 2002).[141]

When examining the forty-seven cultural spaces and expressions selected with the first and second "Proclamations of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity," I can only wonder how, among the traditions from regions devastated by poverty, violence, neglect and epidemics (countries such as Benin, the Dominican Republic, Georgia and the Baltic States), the Noh theater (能楽 *nôgaku*) and *Ningyô jôruri bunraku* (人形浄瑠璃文楽 "repertory puppet

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increasing isolation of the Kii Peninsula resulting from the opening of Shinkansen railways and automobile highways in the 1960s connecting Kansai and Tokyo (these high-speed options enable drivers to bypass the Kii Peninsula altogether). They pledged to work together for early completion of the Ise Bay Road, Tôkai-Nankai Liaison Road and Kii Liaison Road, three arteries that will create a new transportation network enabling drivers to reach any destination within the peninsula in three hours.

[141] Though Ningyô Jôruri has its roots in itinerant ritual puppetry, in its 2002 proclamation, UNESCO emphasizes the tradition's seventh century emergence as professional puppet theater and its "vast repertoire of medieval plays and domestic dramas" (UNESCO 2002:5). The definitive study of itinerant ritual puppetry is Law 1997.

theater") would be considered as requiring equal urgency and protection.[142] Anyone familiar with Japanese culture can attest that these meticulously documented and well-funded urban stage performance traditions are far from vanishing from the cultural record. On the surface, one could argue that recognition by UNESCO will celebrate and sustain the rural forms of these professional performance forms, but if that is the case, is UNESCO planning to protect the rural Noh stages on remote Sado Island? Are puppetry troupes outside of urban centers such as those of Awaji and Tokushima likely to benefit from UNESCO designation?

C. UNESCO: Last hope for salvation?

I offer an additional lens for considering how UNESCO maps onto Japan's cultural property and park systems. Might UNESCO designation be seen as a last hope for salvation for communities in Japan whose designated parks and cultural properties are left unprotected or who are completely left out of discussions about cultural and natural heritage preservation? Many communities are now so skeptical of the cultural property system and Bureau of Cultural Affairs that they no longer seek their aid . "We don't want national treasures or intangible cultural properties," they say. What do they really stand to gain? They receive only minimal assistance and must conform to a vision of their community and practices imposed by outside scholars and organizations. Two examples illustrate the kinds of concerns and complaints I heard during fieldwork. A Shingon Buddhist priest and his followers on the Kunisaki peninsula whose temple has been designated an important cultural property expressed frustration that they have not been permitted by the prefectural government to perform the goma ritual out of a concern for fire damage (Personal communication, June 2002, Kunisaki). Ainu practitioners of a dance form

[142] Noh masked drama and Bunraku puppet theater exemplify urban elites' expressive culture and are informed by subtle aesthetic and literary sensibilities. Japanese Performing Arts historian Karen Brazell profiles both traditions and presents an anthology of plays (1998:115-126, 303-313).

designated as a national intangible folk cultural property in Shiraoi, Hokkaidô, complained bitterly that their skills have atrophied after being made to perform in contrived settings as "tourist Ainu" (観光アイヌ *kankô Ainu*). Because they cannot innovate or adapt their performance to modern styles, it has become increasingly difficult to attract young practitioners to maintain the tradition (Personal communication, July 2003, Shiraoi). These communities are more likely to succeed by relying upon their own efforts in grass roots preservation societies or, alternatively, by seeking aid from international groups such as UNESCO.

I have met a number of Shugendô practitioners who express sincere gratitude to UNESCO for recognizing their sacred spaces and practices. Even critics like Harasawa Kenta find reason for hope. "Finally, 130 years after the violence and destruction of the Meiji period," Harasawa writes, "Shugendô is being recognized by UNESCO for its contribution to humanity" (2002:4). He considers this an opportunity to share Shugendô with the larger world community in service of international understanding. Harasawa hopes UNESCO World Heritage designation will enable communities in Nikkô and the Kumano region to recognize their diverse local histories and cultures. In Harasawa's estimation, this will put UNESCO's ideals into action. In his writings and public speaking, Harasawa reminds local community members that their heritage and cultural property extends beyond physical architecture and encompasses intangible traditions such as Shugendô ascetic training and the legacy of discrimination and suffering during Meiji. To increase public awareness of Nikkô's diverse religious and political history, Harasawa recommends creating detailed pamphlets and an inclusive public museum at the site of what has become famous as Tokugawa Ieyasu's mausoleum. At each meeting of neighborhood associations and merchant cooperatives, Harasawa patiently guides skeptical and frequently contrary members of his audience through the basics of incorporating accurate portrayals of

regional religious and political history into sensible plans for sustainable tourism. Having helped facilitate World Heritage designation at Nikkô, Harasawa believes that it is now up to local citizens like him to make the most of the global recognition and influx of revenue. His proposals seek to leverage domestic financing and technical assistance to help protect the natural environment and restore the complexity of Nikkô's contentious history.

D. Economic, social and environmental considerations

As with Nikkô, the Kii Peninsula's World Heritage designation includes not only temples and shrines, but also the natural environment and human community. This raises a number of practical concerns. For instance, how has World Heritage designation affected the economic and social viability of community members such as hunters, construction workers, fisherman and loggers whose lifestyle and ability to earn a living might be constrained or possibly shut down all together if World Heritage policy dictates such measures?[143] From an ecological and religious standpoint, stopping new road construction, hunting and logging may seem like positive outcomes, but is this always necessarily the case when you consider the actual nature of these ecological niches? Kii Peninsula inhabitants have never been forbidden to harvest timber and other resources from sacred mountains. One should also remember that many forests in Kumano, as in most areas of Japan, are monocultural timber plantations created during the post-war period.[144] These plantations were part of a national campaign to replace trees "sacrificed" during rebuilding of areas devastated by American firebombing during World War II.[145] They require regular thinning and other maintenance.

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[143] For a related study of how practitioners of traditional occupations and leisure activities in Kumano have clashed with recreational hikers from urban areas, see Knight 1999 & 2000.

[144] Tracts composed exclusively of conifers are most common (Figure 4.3).

[145] See Knight 2000 for a more sustained discussion of post-war reforestation campaigns and tensions between recreational forest users and forestry employees in the recent promotion of "multiple use" forests in Japan.

Since the 1990s, Japan has filled eighty percent of its new construction needs with cheaper imported timber from Southeast Asia, the Northwestern United States and Southwestern Canada, leaving these domestic plantation forests neglected and susceptible to problems like inadequate sunlight, soil erosion, silted rivers and diseases like cedar rot. There is ostensibly no viable understory in Japanese forests. The problem is not scarcity of timber resources but of jobs, especially in rural areas like Kumano that are beset by forestry bankruptcies brought on by the aforementioned influx of cheaper, foreign timber and increased use of synthetic materials in modern construction. Aging, rapid rural depopulation and an unwillingness to do manual labor are other key factors in the forestry industry's decline. Forestry is a typical "three K" job generally disliked by urban office workers. "Three K" stands for *kitsui* (きつい "tough"), *kitanai* (汚い "dirty"), and *kikenna* (危険な "dangerous"). In 2000 Kimura Yoshiki, the governor of Wakayama Prefecture, wrote a proposal (the "Green Employment Project") to restore the forests' health and provide employment to a growing number of jobless Kumano residents. In Wakayama prefecture alone the government has provided 1.5 billion Yen (approximately $140 million USD) in subsidies and employed 261 residents during the period 2001-2003 (*Washington Times* 2003). Careful forestry management will help create "multiple use" forests providing timber industry employment but also increased mountain recreation opportunities (Knight 2000).

Tokyo bureaucrats and local political officials and public relations representatives in the Kii Peninsula are realizing that regional economic and ecological needs map on nicely with World Heritage recognition. What they may not have anticipated, however, are the potential clashes between local industries, spiritual and environmental stewards and visiting urban tourists,

each of whom has different visions of how these sacred areas ought best be managed.[146] Examination of the current environmental situation, government forestry subsidies and recent proposals for road construction to maximize tourist revenues in the Kii peninsula suggests that not all of these visions can be accommodated in World Heritage ordered space. Future conflicts seem inevitable. It remains to be seen if UNESCO and local officials will avail themselves of up-to-date research and pragmatic methods for protecting the Kii Peninsula's natural environment, or if this situation will be another instance of sanctioning mass tourism at the expense of the surrounding natural environment and residents' quality of life. These speculations will need to be borne out by sustained fieldwork undertaken over decades following designation of the Kii Peninsula, but we can ask some important questions now about how the designation campaign and first years of World Heritage status have proceeded thus far. For example, when UNESCO states that a "community agreement" is required to proceed with the designation process, which members get to express their opinions, and who gets consistently left out of the discussion? What exactly are stakeholders agreeing to, and what do they get in return? Recognition of "cultural value" and "heritage?" Does recognition for one's cultural value or heritage mean anything to local residents left jobless or stripped of their community's natural beauty and solitude for the sake of tourism?

Several community members have suggested the following be negotiated into the designation.[147] Rather than simply shut down primary industries such as logging and fishing (an unlikely occurrence given the government subsidies), would it not make better sense to offer alternative economic ventures that can be pursued with less environmental degradation? Since 2000, more environmentally sustainable eco-tourist ventures in Kumano such as whale watching,

[146] These conflicts are discussed on pp. 142-144, 174-175 and 191-196.

[147] The following is a summary of comments by Shingu and Nachi residents who requested anonymity gathered during fieldwork interviews July 2003 and 2007.

canoeing and rafting have been attempted. But these activities, too, bring problems like excess garbage and overuse. Local merchants and tour operators simply do not yet have the skills or knowledge to balance the need for employment and tourist revenues with environmental sustainability.

Reaching out to UNESCO and its global networks of experts may be one solution needed to manage an increasingly complex situation, provided, of course, what they offer is expertise in how to meet the demands of tourism in a fragile eco-system. But it must be said that in discussions about whether sacred mountains and pilgrimage trails should be designated as cultural and natural World Heritage sites, certain actors such as temple priests and government bureaucrats yield greater influence and power. Local community members who oppose these decisions have not yet had sufficient opportunities to voice their resistance. Their frustration can be seen in periodic outbursts such as the case of a gentleman in Wakayama who wrote messages in Day-Glo paint on the Kumano trail's iconic stone pathway to protest a municipal decision preventing him from logging on his property.

1. Exclusion rather than remediation of degraded sites

An early and clear indicator of the lack of shared commitment and understanding among various stakeholders was expressed by ICOMOS (International Committee on Monuments and Sites, a non-governmental organization) in their 2004 evaluation of the Kii Peninsula's dossier. ICOMOS highlights the lack of a meaningful plan to ensure the long-term sustainable management of the unprecedented (and complicated) multi-site and surrounding wooded landscape beyond a "handshake agreement" that the three prefectures would "consult" each other in the event of problems (2004). Anticipated tourist windfalls in the amount of 37.3 billion Yen (approximately USD $40.4 million) in the first year following designation played no

insignificant role in the hastily assembled nomination and designation of the Kii Peninsula on less than solid management protocol. To date, no such plan for long-term, sustainable management of the Kii Peninsula sites has appeared. Further causes for concern among ICOMOS members were the fragmentation of ascetics' training paths. Unchecked development of housing settlements (the proliferation of overhead power lines merits special concern), plantation timber forestry, road and tunnel construction, and illegal dumping activities all carried out in close proximity to the Okugake trail have carved up the sacred landscape into a large number of discontinuous swaths, according to their report. In a section entitled "Authenticity and Integrity," concerns about the "discontinuity" of the pilgrimage route are voiced. We learn that the committee was forced to settle upon an expedient compromise. Rather than suggest remediation of degraded sites prior to or following nomination, unnamed ICOMOS officials opted instead to simply leave them out of the designation.

> There is one issue connected to integrity: the discontinuity of the nominated pilgrimage routes. What has been nominated is only those parts of the pilgrim routes which are still relatively intact in terms of the conditions of the track and its setting. Where development has intervened negatively the track has been excluded. This means that the pilgrim routes are in some place a series of short stretches. If the discontinuity is to be understood by visitors, then measures need to be put in place to allow an understanding of the links between disconnected pieces of the route (ICOMOS 2004:39).

We see from this passage that environmentally degraded sites or stretches of the pilgrimage path now encumbered upon by housing settlements, road infrastructure or illegal dumping posed no obstacle to designation or status as World Heritage. Any such compromised sites would simply be excluded from consideration, thus set aside and forgotten. No tourist would pose before them for a photograph.

E. Impacts upon practice: "stairway hell"

Since the World Heritage designation campaign began in 1998, there have been numerous

physical alterations to Mount Ômine's physical environment. These include several new wooden platforms and stairs on the ascetic training course, particularly within those sections accessible to daytrippers wishing to ascend to the summit in a few hours from the Dorogawa Village side. Veteran ascetics have expressed concern about this phenomenon they call "stairway hell" (階段の地獄 *kaidan no jigoku*). Proliferation of stairways makes Mount Ômine easier to ascend and reduces the mountain's cherished danger and uncertainty. This is welcome news for tourists, but for ascetics the ritual ascent's potency is partially derived from the real possibility of injury and death. Such physical danger also places strict limits on the numbers of ascetics who can enter and successfully complete courses on Ômine and in nearby Wakayama. It happens on occasion that practitioners require hospitalization and surgery from injuries sustained during mountain training.

Figure 4.3 Woman boundary gate, Dorogawa, 2003. (Note coniferous plantation forest).

F. Impacts upon tradition: debates about gender prohibition

Another challenge to UNESCO's assumptions about shared human values is the collision of modern gender politics with what the tradition claims is a 1300-year old prohibition of women from climbing Mount Ômine. The most spirited debates about Mount Ômine hinge upon whether female ascetics will finally be permitted to perform austerities alongside men. Observing how Kinpusenji has managed its World Heritage designation has been an excellent study of how a tradition responds to crisis. When the Ômine mountains were designated as the Yoshino-Kumano National Park in 1932, there were similar protests that the tradition banning women undermined the idea behind the park's designation—the creation of opportunities for the general public to enjoy Ômine's natural scenic beauty.[148] Current debates about the Kii Peninsula's World Heritage status transcend Japan's domestic leisure space and provoke reflection upon national identity. The central question for the male practitioners with whom I climbed Mount Ômine is, "Why should Kinpusenji temple, under pressure from an outside institution with only fifty years of history and declining relevance (UNESCO), overturn [what the tradition claims is] a 1,300 year Japanese tradition?" Male and female opposition to lifting the ban appeal to environmental benefits of keeping the mountain "spiritually pure." If women, and then day hikers are permitted to climb to Ômine's summit, according to this logic, it will become a profane mountain like Mount Fuji. Fuji, though lovely on postcards, is notorious for its garbage, vending machines and human excrement. Kinpusenji Shugendô practitioners opposed to lifting the ban argue that the onset of Fuji's current problems can be traced to lifting the prohibition on women and hikers.

Young women, though officially prohibited from climbing Mount Ômine, make up the fastest-growing segment of Shugendô practitioners. They participate in festivals and folk

[148] On controversies surrounding Mount Ômine's designation as a national park, see Miyake 2001:143-158. For an historical perspective on periodic demonstrations protesting the prohibition of women on Mount Ômine, see Kizu 1993.

performing arts events and retreats at other mountain centers and urban ascetic training grounds.[149] It is also rumored that women regularly defy the prohibition on Mount Ômine, climbing during the off-season or disguised as men. Vandalism and graffiti written on the gate and signposts marking the space beyond which women may not proceed are further indicators of opposition and resistance.

Practitioners have debated lifting the prohibition during official meetings, symposia, opinion polls and a lively essay-writing campaign in Kinpusenji's quarterly newsletter. Included in this discussion of changing gender roles is a reflection upon national identity and internal controversies within Japanese Buddhist institutions. The flurry of essays was punctuated by statements from powerful female figures voicing conservative opinions such as the assertion by Yoshida Yoshie （吉田良枝） that "Sanjô ga take [Ômine's summit] is but a dream, and an aspiration. I only gaze upward from below."[150] (*Kinpusenji jihô* 1998:6)

Gojô Kakugyô (五條學尭), head priest of a Hokkaido branch temple of Kinpusenji, memorably participated in the debats. Beginning with self-deprecation ("We Japanese have poor discussion and debate skills. When faced with opinions that run counter to our own, we often become emotional and lose our concentration"), Gojô deftly inserts a critique of mainstream Buddhist institutions from which Shugendô priests are quick to distance themselves:

> Controversies such as abolishing the prohibition of women are valuable opportunities to polish debating skills and consider other such social problems such as the widely held view that Buddhist temples exist solely to profit from funeral services and priests are disconnected from social problems (*Kinpusenji jihô* 1998:6).

Citing a modern proverb about Japan's problematic relationship with America ("If America sneezes, then Japan catches a cold"), Gojô asks, "Why should Japan always imitate a country

[149] A "miniature" Mount Ômine course on Mount Mitake (near Tokyo) and Yoyogi Park are two such sites where young, urban ascetics congregate on weekends.

[150] Yoshida is leader of the Tokushô-kai, a confraternity (kô) affiliated with Kinpusenji in rural Fukuoka.

with such short history as America?" Gojô insisted that the relevant issue is strictly *religious*, a position allowing him to elide troublesome social and political implications. In Gojô's view, the prohibition hinges not upon discrimination "in the derogatory sense" (差別 *sabetsu*), but in the "positive sense" (区別 *kubetsu*). Arguments for "gender difference rather than gender discrimination" have a long history among conservative political and religious organizations in Japan. Groups who have sought to revise the post-war constitution have asserted traditional gender ideologies that enshrine the sanctity of the family as a bulwark against "alleged excessive individualism" arising from assertions of gender equality (Hardacre 2005:240). In a concise study of two attempts at constitutional revision by religious organizations, Hardacre analyzes the mobilization of arguments rejecting 'equality of the sexes' (男女平等 *danjo byôdô*) on the basis that it denies 'distinctions based on sexual difference' (男女間の性差の区別 *danjokan no seisa no kubetsu*) by the Shintô Shrine Association and its political arm Shintô Seiji, who claim such gender differentiation undermines the mother-child relationship and thus the "normal" development of children, the family and nation (Hardacre 2005:241-2). This campaign was undertaken in the context of supporting an attempted revision of Article 24 by the Liberal Democratic party to eliminate specification of the "essential equality of the sexes.'[151] The Shintô Shrine Association, according to Hardacre, is less a religious organization than a full-time lobby group whose chief aims are "prohibiting married women from using their maiden names, preventing the enthronement of a female as emperor, preventing gender equal education, and if possible, repeal of the 1999 Fundamental Law on Gender Equality" (Hardacre 2005:241). Conservative refrains of "gender difference rather than gender discrimination" have implications beyond semantic wrangling and can be heard within Shintô, Shugendô and other Japanese

[151] Christian G. Winkler provides further context and detailed case studies illustrating conservative objections to and attempts to revise Article 24 (2011).

religious and political organizations.

During the week I spent with Gojô in Hokkaido in 2003, the issue of prohibition came up several times. He became uncomfortable with my suggestion that all traditions were initially created by human beings, and most likely powerful males. As a fourth generation male descendent of priest-guides in the Kinpusenji lineage, Gojô opted to speak from his religious authority, leaving aside political and social aspects not in his interests to address.

Visitors to Tanaka Riten's personal blog will find an essay about climbing Sanjogatake with his son that concludes provocatively: "It is inevitable that the time will come when women can also ascend Mount Ômine. When that day arrives my elder daughter also wishes to make the climb together."[152] It is difficult to assess to what extent lifting the prohibition is a serious possibility, but any future decision-making process, if it is to be viewed broadly as legitimate, will have to be informed by open discussions among diverse local stakeholders free from external pressures and internal filtering.

IV. Conclusions: accommodating conflicting visions of World Heritage

In this chapter I have raised questions about cultural heritage, to whom it rightfully belongs and who bears ultimate responsibility for its preservation and upkeep. Previous World Heritage designations in Japan have, in my view, not adequately upheld UNESCO's stated ideals of safeguarding precious heritage. They can be seen as symptomatic of the way World Heritage has come to be regarded as a high-class brand name marketed for regional, national and global tourism. Threats to a tradition's cultural heritage stimulate debates about reform and the proper

[152] Select "Climbing Ômine With My Son" (息子と大峯山に昇る *Musuko to Ôminesan ni noboru)* from the following site: http://homepage3.nifty.com/enno-f/zatubun_5.htm. Accessed 4 February 2013. The essay first appeared in the January 1999 *Abeya Shimin Shinbun*.

management of the effects of modernization. No matter how creative, innovative or modern responses by a tradition's leaders may seem, their ultimate concern is survival and preserving tradition. Notions of timelessness, universal cultural values and a master list of World Heritage or Masterpieces of Humanity come embedded in discourses ripe for appropriation by local stakeholders hoping to achieve certain spiritual, economic and political agendas for their communities. Despite their radically different visions for the Kii Peninsula's future, religious ascetics, local community members, tourists, politicians and even timber industrialists are all finding satisfying interpretations of UNESCO's global, imported idea of heritage. In significant ways, their interpretations and policies echo those of previous designation regimes such as the national park, national treasure and cultural property legislation. It remains to be seen how these competing visions will be accommodated in the specific context of the Kii Peninsula designation as the region receives an estimated fifteen million visitors annually in the first decade after UNESCO World Heritage designation.[153] Further longitudinal field research and data gathering will be required to assess the long-term economic, ecological and social impacts of designation. Will UNESCO and local officials make use of up-to-date research and implement pragmatic methods for protecting the Kii Peninsula's natural environment, or will this be another case of promoting mass tourism without sufficient regard for the impact upon the natural environment and human community?

Postscript, June 2012

A series of typhoons devastated the Kii Peninsula in autumn 2011, killing at least 34 local residents. Many more were injured, traumatized and are grieving for deceased loved ones. Destruction of homes, businesses and a portion of the Hongu Taisha site and Kumano Pilgrimage

[153] Source: Kii Peninsula page on UNESCO's World Heritage Center site: http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1142. Last accessed 4 February 2013.

path (both are World Heritage properties) reminded residents of the awesome force of nature and their vulnerability in the face of it. According to Alena Eckelmann, a Shingu based free-lance writer and business consultant originally from East Germany, main access roads and tourist infrastructure related to World Heritage have been rebuilt, but homes, apartment blocks, shops and roads that are not on tourists' itineraries remain as they were when flood waters receded (Personal communication by Skype, 2012). Eckelmann had relocated to Kumano from Tokyo shortly after the triple disaster of 11 March 2011 only to find herself in more serious harm's way. The house she had been renting was completely destroyed while she was away performing austerities at Tateishi's mountain training site. Her friend and co-occupant had gone missing. Police later recovered parts of his body among the wreckage.

Publication in December 2011 of the case of a middle school student in rural Mie prefecture repeatedly injured while biking to school eighty minutes per day over a stretch of mountain road strewn with uncleared typhoon debris eventually prompted a local school board to provide ad hoc shuttle service one day a week (*The Japan Times* 24 December 2011). Meanwhile, junior high school students and their families living near a provincial route that tourists travel to visit World Heritage properties have smooth passage along freshly laid pavement. Eckelmann informed me that frustrated neighbors are taking their insurance settlements and moving to Osaka, rather than rebuild in Kumano (Personal communication by Skype, 2012). When I inquired about their reasons, respondents who requested anonymity spoke of frustration that the municipal government has not rebuilt roads or assisted in clearing debris in areas where tourists do not visit. As with the policy discussed above favoring exclusion over remediation of degraded sites within World Heritage ordered spaces, post-typhoon reconstruction plans also appear to exclude sites that will not be objects of tourists' gaze. Entire families' lives are on standby with no clear reconstruction plan or budget allocated. One can

understand how Japan's national and municipal governments, media and public would prioritize reporting about and rebuilding the stricken Tohoku area and attending to the nation's long-term energy needs. But in having been overshadowed by tragic events of Tôhoku, typhoon survivors in the Kii Peninsula have found themselves yet again lacking needed assistance from municipal governments in clearing and rebuilding road infrastructure, providing affordable and safe housing or reassuring them that their concerns matter. Meanwhile tourists continue to flow into the region, oblivious to their struggles. As Tateishi Kôshô might say, "Is this World Heritage?"

CONCLUSIONS

I. Research context and contributions

This thesis has focused upon the experiences of urban lay Shugendô practitioners who perform occasional condensed mountain ritual ascents but who are primarily engaged in mundane occupations. Answers have been sought to the questions, "Why does rebirth within the Tantric Womb become necessary for busy, urban dwellers?" and "How might urban ascetics' initial motivations and subsequent integration of mountain learning resonate with broader concerns about employment, environment, family, health and well-being, rising suicide rate, memory and commemoration during Japan's Lost Decade(s)? Participatory-observer research has been undertaken at field sites some readers may regard as unconventional: mountains, forests, caves, waterfalls and temples but also hostess nightclubs, karaoke boxes, mountain rave parties, cement and extermination company headquarters, film festivals and piano recitals.

An understanding of the myriad ways contemporary lay practitioners integrate lessons from Shugendô mountain training in their daily lives in Tokyo, Osaka and San Diego has been my primary focus. In so doing I have attempted to embody the accessible teaching espoused by Tanaka and his staff at Kinpusenji, "From mountain practice to home practice." This has been undertaken with the aim of contributing to a new direction in studies of Shugendô, asceticism and pilgrimage that no longer confines participants and practices within the discrete frame of the mountain, forest or waterfall training site. Reader, Gold and Kaell's focus upon integration within non-pilgrimage spaces has been inspiring in this regard. As anthropologist Sarah Strauss suggests, "We cannot place Others in a restricted locale, while we as ethnographers have the freedom to roam" (1995:16). Limiting our representation to the discrete frame of mountain ascetic training in ethereal landscapes comes with the additional risk of representing Japan (or any other industrial country) as little more than a network of rural ascetic training grounds,

remote temples and sacred landscapes. To avoid such misrepresentation, an investigation of how mountain and city are interrelated and interconnected has been undertaken. Rocks, boulders, trees, rivers, streams and waterfalls are juxtaposed with concrete, asphalt, neon, glass and steel. As Ginza financier and Lotus Ascent guide Ozaki Hitoshi asks, "Might the two be seen as one?" (Personal communication, August 2007, Tokyo). If so, how do contemporary Shugendô practitioners integrate this non-dualistic worldview into the complex networks of experiences, capacities, relationships and institutions in which they are embedded? How does the ethnographer and filmmaker represent these multiple levels of understanding and engagement while also being in continual motion and flux?

Another constant focus has been to demonstrate how priest-guides Tanaka Riten and Tateishi Kôshô have creatively reinvented hallmark practices and spaces to suit the needs of diverse urban clientele. The creation of the overnight Lotus Ascent of Mount Ômine and "Slide to Rebirth" in Kumano for busy urban dwellers, establishment of a "Three Day Monk Camp" for so-called "problem youth" and their overwhelmed parents, creation and maintenance of an innovative "eco-pilgrimage" that equips participants with the knowledge and skills for greater civic participation, and successful campaign to designate the Kii Peninsula a UNESCO World Heritage cultural landscape are illustrative cases. Each activity, practice and event serves as a gateway through which newcomers are initiated and invited to "enter with the body" and engage with the tradition's more subtle and powerful practices on a profound, experiential level.

Tanaka and Gojô offer something as simple as a mandala coloring book or temple floors to mop monk style (plowing forward on all fours) for the kids. For adults, it could be a twenty-six kilometer ascent of Mount Ômine and suspension headfirst over an expansive ravine to provoke repentance, an adrenaline rush and sense of what German theologian Rudolph Otto famously called "mysterium tremendum"—a sense of unworthiness in the face of rugged,

expansive nature (1923:12-13). Tateishi Kôshô, for his part, has created a space where lay participants can "know their heart-minds," gain pragmatic organizational skills and develop their own cogent analyses of crises arising in post-bubble Japan. Tateishi empowers urban ascetic novices to discipline their bodies and insert their own stories of embodied experiences of doing shugyô into the mythic narratives that inhere in the Kii Peninsula's dramatic, multivalent landscape. Tateishi's efforts were examined in the light of Giroux's formulation of an "engaged civic pedagogy" (2005). In so doing, Tanaka and Tateishi have worked to secure their place in a lineage of ascetic standouts in the Kii Peninsula's illustrious history.

Attempts to demystify, adapt and promote esoteric ritual practices for the general public have enabled a formerly proscribed mountain ascetic tradition to rebuild itself and ensure survival on the strength of the broadest possible participation by the general public. Print, television, Internet, social media and word-of-mouth promotion have played key roles in recruitment practices beginning in the late 1980s. These efforts are situated within broader public interest in Esoteric Buddhism, mountain asceticism and New Age spirituality and healing practices. Increased participation in contemporary Shugendô practices during this period has occurred in part due to individuals seeking temporary release from and coping strategies (if not solutions) for a range of socioeconomic and existential crises. Market reforms such as economic deregulation, outsourcing, restructuring, normalization of temporary contract work and mandatory unpaid overtime have placed stress upon individuals and families and contributed to alcohol and substance abuse, domestic violence, poverty and debt, divorce, infertility, school refusal and suicide.

I do not claim that a majority of contemporary Shugendô practitioners are wage slaves, *freeters*, NEET or precariat revolutionaries who come to the mountains with fragmented selves, heavy hearts, broken families and empty bank accounts. Some individuals introduced in the

thesis do face one or more of these grave challenges. But each individual has his or her own particular set of complex reasons for doing mountain shugyô that do not easily fit into overarching analytical frameworks or demographic categories. And certainly middle class aspirations for travel, surplus disposable income and leisure time accrued from the post-war national pension system also trigger participation. Kinpusenji priests distinguish between those who "enter with the body" and those who "enter with the intellect." Depth of visceral engagement does not, in my estimation, however, break down neatly along class, gender or generational divisions. The situation is much more complex. I have attempted to do some justice to the myriad reasons urban lay practitioners displace themselves over long distances at considerable expense to give their bodies, minds and spirits a workout in rural mountain training sites.

When we initially proposed to Tateishi and Tanaka the idea of making a documentary film to render comprehensible to a broad audience of global strangers an ostensibly esoteric ritual tradition, there were (to our surprise) no limits placed upon access to practices, spaces and material resources. Nor were Abela and I discouraged from filming anything or anyone we wished after we were formally introduced before the group of 120 participants during the Lotus Ascent and obtained informed consent from principal characters. This unanticipated access and high level of participation on the part of priests and mountain ascetic practitioners portrayed in the film raised questions about notions of secrecy and formal initiatory protocol as they have been conceived in the academic study of religion and Tantric studies more generally. During principal photography and post-production several observations confirmed Bouchy's characterization of the "antinomian" tendencies of Shugendô (2009: 30-39), or what might be regarded as sources of productive tension, namely—1) secrecy and intermittent display of esoteric content, 2) gender prohibition and promotion of women to high rank and positions of

authority, 3) intentional risk-taking and hyper concern for safety, and 4) radical non-duality and reification of dualistic thought.

The presence of a camera and mandate to represent "un-emphatic moments" (MacDougall 1982:8-9) in contemporary Shugendô greatly facilitated research access and enabled the most productive period of field research to date. Bringing a camera and professional filmmaker into the field permitted unprecedented access and helped create the conditions for a participatory and collaborative fieldwork and filmmaking approach. Participants' greater investment in our project after having viewed early attempts to represent them in our makeshift editing suite at Tateishi's temple is one example. By soliciting participants' feedback and suggestions for locations and activities to film, our representation became more complete. Abela's ability to capture behind-the-scenes footage of ritual preparation, offerings and package deliveries provided compelling audio-visual evidence for the relationship of mutual support between Tateishi and devotees previously overlooked. The decision to bring a camera into the field also introduced new risks and challenges such as how to represent the shifting meeting ground where co-participants' subjectivities intertwined with ours. In having gently reprimanded me for being an "eco-fanatic" during a casual lunch with a Shingu prayer group, Tateishi brought this dynamic into sharper focus.

II. Religion as an element of civil society

In the Introduction Hardacre's provocation to analyze religious organizations as an element of Japanese civil society was presented (2004:390). At stake for Hardacre is treating religion as a normal part of modern society, and not an "anti-modern holdout," nor set of "compensatory responses to the contradictions of modernization and globalization" (2004:390). It is in this context of modern civil society engagement that the efforts of Tateishi Kôshô, Tanaka Riten and their creative reinvention of Shugendô ascetic practices for the general public are presented.

Tateishi and Tanaka's lay students and devotees' embodied engagement of the teachings and attempts to reconnect with the natural world and human community have propelled them back into their urban home communities, households, work sites and community spaces with new energy, ideas, capacities and skills for bringing forth the kind of future society they wish to see. We may not be talking about revolution on the same scale as Tahir Square or Zuccotti Park, but we should not downplay the significance of incremental change within the heart-minds of generations of Shugendô participants. Through a great variety and diversity of tactics, primarily on a small scale and out of the limelight (in contrast to the large-scale protests against the Iraq War organized by Japanese religious groups in 2003 discussed by Hardacre), these charismatic ascetic practitioners have generated a store of hope and practical politics for civic engagement in twenty-first century Japan. Tateishi's eco-pilgrimage in particular is situated within the broader context of industrial pollution tragedies such as the Minamata methyl-mercury poisoning by the Chisso Chemical Company (Johnston 2006; Walker 2010; George 2012) and citizens' movements launched in response (George 2001; Kingston 2004).

An independent ascetic in Kumano practices organic rice agriculture, plants biodiverse tree saplings, remediates degraded environmental sites and conducts monthly conch shell lessons in Tokyo. A temple priest uses social media and popular books, films and other visual media to promote accessible ritual practices to the general public. A former Osaka school refuser is now thriving in a New Zealand high school playing rugby and learning English. An Osaka cement company president of Korean ancestry provides humanitarian aid and entertainment for those made homeless by the Kobe-Hanshin earthquake in 1995. He mentors a multi-cultural cohort of precarious youth entertainers in the Osaka pleasure quarters and recruits partners to develop technologies to clean up the industrial process. An Osaka metals engineer serves as a mentor to "problem youth" at the Three Day Monk Camp and performs monthly appeasement services for

an extermination company. In each individual's story we find an ascetic standout striving to embody the practice of mutual empowerment and interpenetration ("Exchanging self for other") and contemporary Shugendô teaching, "From mountain practice to home practice."

A. Accessible, sustainable pathways

Contemporary Shugendô traditions have very few temples to place ordained priests upon completion of monastic training. Moreover, most Shugendô temples are located in remote rural communities far from the urban centers where the majority of their affiliated practitioners and ordained householders live. Shugendô priests must therefore be especially resourceful and savvy promoters of their services and sites. Priests from non-temple families like Tateishi face even greater challenges. Without land, equity, a trusted family lineage and a congregation to inherit, startup costs for establishing a new temple can be insurmountable. Pair that with the lingering suspicion of religion in general since the 1995 Aum subway terrorist attack, and we can see that Shugendô priests looking to establish new temples have enormous challenges to overcome. There is thus quite intense competition and abundantly creative innovation in the marketing and sales of Shugendô priests' commodities and services. Growth of their clientele and expansion of their scope of activities for the general public is the only way for Shugendô temples to sustain themselves and justify continued training and ordination procedures. Otherwise, grooming new priests with no place to go upon graduation would be pointless.

The annual overnight Lotus Ascent, attended by lay and professional ascetics might be reasonably compared to an academic conference or trade show, where a variety of charismatic personalities vie for attention and market share for their services (be they mountain guide services during the Lotus Ascent, participation fees during the Three Day Monk Camp, lodging and meals, spiritual counseling, lay ordination, memorial and appeasement rites or conch shell lessons). Assorted paraphernalia and gear (ascetic robes, sutra books, vajras, amulets, talismans,

conch shells and so on) are an important revenue stream for local merchants as well. I have not argued for an exclusively instrumental explanation for what may appear to some as highly commodified interactions between professionals, lay practitioners and the general public. But paying attention to the ways these religious entrepreneurs maintain financial solvency and market share by means of ritual technological innovations and savvy media promotion is an important element in understanding the surge of interest in Shugendô over the last few decades. UNESCO World Heritage status of the Kii Peninsula was a remarkably clever strategy to ensure increased market share as was the development of a popular part-time ordination process for householders.

That there is indeed something valuable, meaningful and vital for lay adherents is manifest in the increasing rates of participation in Shugendô since the 1980s. If Shugendô priests did not offer the general public something of substance, meaning and value not found elsewhere, why else would these primarily rural temples and training centers consistently attract significant numbers of primarily urban and very busy lay people? Urban lay practitioners must displace themselves over long distances at considerable expense to participate in short bouts of austerities and other ritual activities. Although large temples like Kinpusenji have an elaborate ritual calendar and vast networks of followers and branch temples, my focus has been the overnight Lotus Ascent of Mount Ômine by a group of 120 or so male lay practitioners. Throughout answers have been sought to questions such as, "Just who are these men?" "Where do they come from?" "What motivates them to participate in what appear to be exotic practices that intentionally places their health, safety and well-being at risk?" Why depart from one's mundane existence of comfort and security to be scolded and disciplined by a professional cadre of powerful mountain ascetics?" "How is the experience actually made to be pleasurable, even enjoyable?"

Contemporary Shugendô practices re-imagined and reinvented by Tanaka and Tateishi present an embodied pathway for overcoming alienation from the human community and natural world within a highly attractive though potentially treacherous mental and physical landscape. Rather than fill participants' heads with subtle philosophy or biographies of ascetic notables, Shugendô guides urge lay novices to do mountain shugyô and contemplate nature to see whether any insights or breakthroughs might be made. Participants note having found relief from various modern afflictions and hardships that flow from the complicity of life in a modern, urban industrialized society whose "growth" was derived from extracting raw materials from nature and labor from a disposable, global labor pool. The fundamental interconnectedness of all sentient beings takes on greater urgency and import in an age when prefectural legislatures debate whether to accept irradiated soil for long-term storage in residential areas (Wakayama is a candidate), public protests in Tokyo against nuclear reactor startups continue as we approach the second anniversary of the Tôhoku disaster, and more than 270 toxic and carcinogenic chemicals are found in the umbilical chord blood of a random sample of newborns (Gottlieb 2010:492). They may not be revolutionaries, but urban lay Shugendô practitioners are quietly facing up to complex local and global challenges. They work to bring about incremental change within themselves and their immediate spheres of influence by adjusting their daily habits of consuming, thinking and being in the world.

B. *Tateishi's quiet example of self-sufficiency*

At his *Forest of Mountain Learning,* Tateishi practices organic and sustainable rice agriculture and vegetable production and subsists upon a vegetarian diet taking only what is needed for health. He produces all of his family's annual rice consumption and most of their fresh produce in an effort to be self-sufficient（自給自食 *jikyu jisoku*). In doing so, Tateishi opts out of the

mainstream of dependence, over-consumption and exploitation. His efforts are part of a growing counter-movement in contemporary Japan where the myriad benefits of traditional rice agriculture and organic production are being reassessed. Especially at a time when Japanese citizens have voluntarily reduced their energy consumption by 25% in the first year after the Tôhoku disaster. This reduction of energy use could put eleven nuclear reactors offline permanently. At stake is much more than simply good, healthy food and intact soil and waterways. Such sustainable agriculture practices also have the potential to restore Japan's national identity, standing in the region and help it avoid what will be certain political fallout from reliance upon food imports and unpredictable and dangerous sources of domestic energy production.

Loss of Japanese food sovereignty due to removing protective trade barriers on production sectors (including rice agriculture) where Japan does not maintain a competitive advantage is perhaps one of the most troubling topics discussed in Gavan McCormack's text *The Emptiness of Japanese Affluence* (2001). It is particularly galling that the main pressure tactics for "integration" into the world market come from the United States, itself one of the great "bastions of neoprotectionism" for its commodity crop producers of the Midwest (McCormack 2001:126). Wheat, dairy and corn producers are singled out as being an especially bloated and unsustainable segment of American agriculture. The little-known case of Jamaica's dairy sector going bankrupt as a direct result of similar "integration" spelled the death knell for Jamaica's formerly robust dairy industry.[154] A flood of cheap American surplus dry milk products made Jamaican fresh dairy products comparatively more expensive for consumers getting by on only a few dollars per day. Jamaica's experiences may seem unlikely in Japan, but to go down a path of

[154] Depicted in Stephanie Black's documentary film *Life and Debt: Jamaica and the WTO* (2001). Elix Sandor Katz also writes of the contradiction and ironies of "free trade" with respect to Jamaica and the WTO (2005:9-10).

such intense dependence upon food imports does not bode well for Japan's future. And as MacCormack rightly points out, such a relationship of dependence upon and over-consumption (飽食 *hôshoku*) of the agricultural products of regional neighbors (Australia, Thailand and the Philipines, for example) is tantamount to a situation of "neo-colonialism" that is becoming politically untenable. As McCormack writes,

> Prosperity in late twentieth-century Japan has been achieved at the cost of stripping away the defenses of future generations and making them vulnerable to unpredictable future world food markets. It has involved building Japan into a relationship with its neighbor countries that combines domination and dependence, contradiction rather than cooperation. … Increasingly, Japan's onverconsumption (hôshoku) is achieved by taking food out of the mouths of the poor and hungry, compensating by greed and gourmet fantasies for the failure to meet the aspiration for social and personal fulfillment. The rising wave of agricultural imports not only ruptures and distorts the food policies of the region, but also threatens virtually all Japanese producers. At current rice support levels, which are certain to be cut further, only 2 percent were expected to be able to survive (McCormack 2001:44).

Among many debilitating regional impacts of Japan's food dependency, McCormack calls attention to the recent cultivation of a Japanese preference for "marbled beef" that has completely reshaped the Australian ranch system, cattle body structure, and devastated formerly intact though fragile ecosystems where pasture-raised animals converted what humans cannot eat (grass) into a form of nourishing protein they can (beef). In having now converted their cattle ranches into Japan's beef feedlot, Australian producers now feed cows grain (and antibiotics) in massive concentrated area food lot operations (CAFOs) that have become the scourge in Australia, the United States and anywhere beef is being produced in the global South for Northern consumers. Far from being a "quixotic" or nostalgic and reactionary turn to traditional agrarian folkways, Tateishi's reassessment of traditional, organic food production and a vegetarian lifestyle could very well function, in MacCormack's estimation, as a "quest for an identity and as a precondition for a confident, cooperative Japanese involvement in creating the

future international system" (McCormack 2001:44). Not to mention help secure and protect human rights, democracy and social justice in the region—goals that Japan is at least nominally a signatory to through various UN declarations and resolutions. Until one employs this level of interconnected and global systems thinking, what's on offer in abundance in Japanese supermarkets and its consequences for health, well-being and social justice would be opaque to most consumers and citizens.

Tateishi's quiet example of self-sufficiency and provision of a learning and practice space for a diverse cohort of downshifters, backsliders, school refusers, and spiritually inclined is far from being an anti-modern holdout taking comfort or compensatory pleasure in a nostalgic return to a rural Japanese homeland (故郷 *furusato*) that never was. Tateishi and his devotees, neighbors and friends, whether they have relocated to rural Kumano from urban centers or are short-term visitors who will return to their city homes, are in fact actively engaged in pursuits and activities that illuminate sustainable future pathways. They participate in creating a multi-cultural Japan that embraces sustainability, food and energy sovereignty and the best ideals of global and regional cooperation and citizenship. The small-scale movement he is working diligently to build can be fruitfully analyzed as a grass-roots movement and element of civil society. Tateishi's creative update of hallmark Shugendô practices (mountain retreats, entering caves and waterfalls, meditation and manual labor in the rice fields) provides an affordable means for leisure, self-cultivation and healing that attract a broad cross-section of urban residents.

III. Future directions

In future research it may prove fruitful to document and analyze the long-term impacts of UNESCO World Heritage on practitioners, practices and practice sites in the Kii Peninsula. The

enduring presence and debates about gender prohibition on Mount Ômine could also be investigated, perhaps by a mixed gender research team. A systematic analysis of the forms of address, content and reception to ascetic promotional media might also prove of value and interest for the ways it might reveal innovation and change in contemporary Shugendô. Have these campaigns to promote interest in and participation by lay participants been successful? How have they transformed and even created new demographics among Shugendô communities? Will this model of part-time, occasional participation by urban residents persist? How will future developments in Japan's economy, society and culture influence and shape new directions taken by priests and practitioners? Will participation by broader sections of the population have any influence on further development and exploitation of Japan's natural environment? Will it ensure Kinpusenji and other Shugendô temples' survival into the twenty-first century? What can be understood from the experiences of urban lay participants whose practice takes place exclusively in cities? Will their practices and integration of core teachings further transform the tradition? If so, how? Finally, will Shugendô "go viral" and be embraced by practitioners outside of Japan? What role will social and conventional media play in propagating the tradition to a global audience far from Japan's mountain training grounds? How will this impact transmission, ordination and training procedures? These and other questions might be pursued to attain greater depth of understanding of the dynamic and creative reinvigoration of contemporary Shugendô.

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