

REVIEW ARTICLE

## Shugendo and Kyushu

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Allan G. Grapard. *Mountain Mandalas: Shugendō in Kyushu*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, Bloomsbury Shinto Studies, 2016. 320 pages. Hardcover, \$70.00; paperback, \$39.95; Kindle, \$68.79. ISBN 978-1474249003.

**M**OUNTAIN MANDALAS: SHUGENDŌ IN KYUSHU by Allan G. Grapard spotlights two highly conspicuous yet enigmatic features of Japan’s cultural and historical topography. The first is Shugendo 修験道, a mountain-based institutional and ritual system whose combinatory beliefs and practices represent a “dominant aspect of Japanese spiritual history and practices” (xii). The second is Kyushu, an island long ignored by Yamato-centric approaches to Japanese history and religion, yet whose people, places, and gods were borrowed by that center and constitute “essential components of Japan’s imperial mythology and cultic system” (10).

Mandala—multidimensional ritual landscapes pervaded with symbolism and populated by deities and devotees—serve as fitting models for a volume guided by the premise that mountains are “signs to be deciphered” (6). Drawing deeply upon decades of research and skillfully combining historical and textual analysis, Grapard sets out to reconstruct *yamabushi* 山伏 conceptions and practices of space and time at three Kyushu sites.<sup>1</sup> Three dense chapters reveal the history

1. Grapard’s methodology contrasts with the approach taken by authorities in the field of Shugendo studies (for example, Murayama Shūichi 村山修一, Miyake Hitoshi 宮家 準, and Gorai Shigeru 五来 重).

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and practice of “spatial knowledge” (3) at Usa-Hachiman 宇佐八幡, the Kunisaki Peninsula 国東半島, and Mt. Hiko 英彦山.<sup>2</sup>

In chapter 1 (“Shugendō and the Production of Social Space”), Grapard surveys the early histories of the sites and explains how these neighboring Kyushu locales, “tightly associated” in their appropriation, assimilation, and transformation, developed on remarkably different trajectories.<sup>3</sup> Usa and Hachiman, a site and a god not readily associated with Shugendo, take the main stage here, but Grapard reasons that without Usa and Hachiman there is no Shugendo in Kyushu (or at least not the Shugendo that transpired in Kyushu). Grapard considers that the significance of Usa in the historical narrative of Kyushu and the rest of the Japanese archipelago can hardly be overstated, even if many historical details remain shrouded in mystery.<sup>4</sup> The precise origins of the Hachiman cult in Usa remain murky and controversial before the ninth century (18), but Usa’s strong regional identity was well established by at least the eighth century, in increasing collaboration with the Yamato polity. Usa Hachiman’s atonement ritual (*hōjōe* 放生会) and its god’s reputation for supernatural benevolence emerged together with Yamato power and in the context of the central government’s quelling of uprisings in Kyushu (most prominently the Hayato 隼人 Rebellion of 720). Hachiman narratives assumed an increasingly Buddhist flavor as they became enshrined throughout Western Japan, and by the ninth century Hachiman stood as an imperially patronized and fully “Buddhized” god (that is, a god defined as a bodhisattva who protected imperial territory, acted as a purifier, and whose “voice” was controlled by male Buddhist prelates as opposed to previously powerful female shrine officiants/seers). Grapard’s lengthy explication of eighth-century narratives concerning Yamato and Kyushu (22–34) meanders perhaps too far given the chapter title, but his fresh perspectives on these complex matters certainly deserve the space.

Kunisaki, the flower-shaped peninsula to the east of Usa, did not amass the same renown as Usa-Hachiman or Hiko but also weighed heavily in the Kyushu narrative. *Kofun* dot the northern and eastern parts of Kunisaki, and the area is

2. At only eight pages, chapter 4 is more an epilogue.

3. Mt. Hiko developed as an imperially affiliated Shugendo center overseen by Shōgo-in 聖護院 (and Onjōji 園城寺); Usa, after its destruction by the Minamoto in 1181, fell under the authority of the Iwashimizu 岩清水 Hachiman Shrine-temple complex; and Kunisaki became a trustee of Mudōji 無動寺 at Mt. Hiei and was thus impacted by its Sannō 山王 cult. All three developed ritual systems influenced by Tendai esotericism (*taimitsu* 台密), however, and Kumano 熊野 Shugendo exerted influence on all three sites as well.

4. He states with certainty the following: (1) a shrine dedicated to an entity called Yahata 八幡 seems to have been transferred to Ogura 小椋 hill from the summit of Mt. Omoto 御許山 in 725; (2) a shrine dedicated to Himegami 比売神 was erected next to it in 734; (3) a Buddhist temple was transferred in 738 and erected next to these; and (4) a third shrine dedicated to Okinaga Tarashihime no mikoto 息長帯比売命 was erected in 823 (27).

home to some of the oldest estates of the Usa-Hachiman Shrine-temple complex. Eight Buddhist temples were established on the peninsula at the beginning of the Heian period, and another twenty temples were constructed by the end of the period—twenty-eight temples in total that became conceived as a single unit, the Rokugō Manzan 六郷満山.<sup>5</sup> Mountain ascetics (*gyōja* 行者) almost certainly populated the rich lands of Kunisaki from early times, although a “frustrating” paucity of records prevents a clear understanding of their activities (64). From 1123, Mt. Hiei authorities assumed authority over the Kunisaki temple group, engendering thereafter a unique religious milieu flavored by Tendai streams of Buddhism, the mixed worship of buddhas and gods (*shinbutsu shūgō* 神仏習合), and the peninsula’s rugged natural topography.

Regarding Mt. Hiko, we know little about gods or buddhas there before the eleventh century. The *Engishiki* 延喜式 (comp. 927) notes that shrines existed in the region, but scholars have been unable to confirm any details about those early gods. (Perhaps there was a sanctuary dedicated to the Munakata 宗像 goddesses?) Much of Hiko’s early Buddhist history is similarly mysterious, although Buddhism was certainly flourishing in adjacent areas (Kunisaki, Usa, and Dazaifu). Grapard directs attention to Mt. Hiko’s “sudden eruption” (xiii) as a prominent sacred center from the eleventh century, one deeply connected to the imperial center (via the Ima-Kumano 今熊野/Shōgo-in 聖護院 Shrine-temple complex). “The mountain sanctuary ... became a political institution” (79). Indeed, Mt. Hiko’s political ties would be the source of countless identity struggles at the mountain throughout the medieval and early modern periods.

The wealth of historical information presented in chapter 1 can be difficult to digest at times, but it serves as a solid foundation for Grapard’s subsequent forays into the social and ritual worlds of the three sites.

Grapard opens chapter 2 (“Geotyped and Chronotyped Social Spaces”) by sketching a structural “modeling of existential space” (84). Drawing on Henri Lefebvre (real space vs. ideal space) and John Bender and David Wellbery’s term “chronotype” (which they adapted from Mikhail Bakhtin), Grapard introduces “geotypes” (space) and “chronotypes” (time) as conceptual models that underscore the lived dimensions of space and time. The ritual and social practices at Mt. Hiko and, to a lesser extent, Usa (Kunisaki is not featured in this chapter) are brought into relief through close readings of primary texts. Grapard first describes in fascinating detail the “spatial choreography” and “temporal rhythm” (85) of Usa’s Stately Progress Ritual Assembly (*gyōkōe* 行幸会). Once every six

5. The temple collective is first referenced in 1135, but is regarded locally as the creation of Ninmon 仁聞, an eighth-century reincarnation of Hachiman as a great bodhisattva. According to Grapard, we might understand this idealized past in terms of local understandings of political and economic fluctuations and attempts to gain or maintain control (59).

years, from the ninth century until the Edo period, Hachiman icons and their clothing were reproduced and then traveled to a series of shrines across northeastern Kyushu. Usa's regalia were concomitantly paraded to separate shrines. The old icons were eventually released into the sea. This Stately Progress necessitated both time-sensitive processes and complex orchestration at many different sites.

The chapter is centrally concerned with delineating the process whereby Mt. Hiko's natural space became a constructed place—indeed, the most prominent “site of cult” in Kyushu.<sup>6</sup> Grapard outlines several examples of spatial practices (for example, nightly circumambulations of the mountain by *yamabushi*) and spatial arrangements (for example, the depictions of deities on the oldest extant map of the mountain, from the fourteenth century). Temporal considerations are also explained. For example, different deities were ritually associated with different times of the day and with zodiac animals, the six Buddhist rebirth destinations, and the twenty-eight lunar mansions (121).

Grapard's presentation of the Four Lands Boundaries (*shido kekkaï* 四土結界) system at Mt. Hiko (115–37) is a highlight of the chapter. *Yamabushi* perceived the entire mountain as a four-tiered training hall, or *dōjō* 道場. From the twelfth or thirteenth century the mountain was “mandalized” through the performance of the Tendai “Lotus Blossom Ritual,” a series of ritualized meditations drawn from scriptures Kūkai brought back from China. The rite was based on a scene from the eleventh chapter of the *Lotus Sutra* in which Prabhūtaratna Buddha creates a jeweled stupa-shaped reliquary for Śākyamuni. Importantly, the religious topography that *yamabushi* inscribed onto Mt. Hiko entailed strict rules concerning altitude, purity, morality, and salvation. These were enforced through four zones of inhabitation—“profane” culture where women and animals could roam freely at the bottom, and “pure” nature devoid of blood pollution and bodily fluids at the top—that reflected (constructed) biological and social hierarchies. The “geotypical” mapping of this sacred space also involved a “chronotypical” dimension, as time was thought to pass at different speeds in each layer. In this section and others (see 137–55 on the *yamabushi*'s visionary experience and embodiment of space for an example), Grapard demonstrates how “natural space came to be organized in terms of a transcendent order” (133).

Chapter 2 consists mostly of textual analysis, and as such reveals little about social actualities or their agencies. Grapard employs a more historical approach in chapter 3 (“Festivities and Processions: Spatialities of Power”). Here, he details

6. By the twelfth century, *yamabushi* were performing ritual practices at forty-nine caves in the mountain's vicinity, and according to the fourteenth-century *Hikosan ruki* 彦山流記, Ryōsenji 靈山寺, the mountain's main temple, boasted more than two hundred meditation halls. An imperially sanctioned abbot governed the many assemblies, and more than three hundred male residents of varying ranks attended them (Grapard says nothing about the activities of women or the larger community at and around the mountain).

the spatial orientation of various festivals and rites at Mt. Hiko as they reflected and inflected the complex and shifting socio-political arrangements of major players (157–208). The dramatically shifting power dynamics of three “socio-cultic groups” (Buddhist, kami-dedicated/Shinto, and combinatory/Shugendo) are analyzed through the window of the mountain’s ritual calendar. We learn, for example, how the power of different religious demographics was “radically altered” (162), first in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century by Oda Nobunaga and Toyotomi Hideyoshi, and again during the early modern period in the wake of changing land management policies and fierce competition over priestly lineage. This reviewer found Grapard’s vignette about Hiko’s female abbess in the late seventeenth century (165–66) and his thorough treatment of seasonal peregrinations at Mt. Hiko (190–206) especially intriguing. The chapter touches on conflicts of power between Mt. Hiko and Mt. Hōman 宝満山 near Dazaifu (which it sought to control) and Shōgo-in in Kyoto (which sought to control it) and includes subsections on oracular speech in Usa’s Hachiman cult (208–16) and the vicissitudes of itinerant practices at Kunisaki (216–33).

True to its title (“Shattered Bodies, Statues, and the Entreaties of Truncated Memory”), chapter 4 sketches the violent attacks on Buddhism and Shugendo during the late nineteenth-century cultural revolution and their devastating effects, namely the razing of architectural works and icons and the decimation of priestly populations (and their ritual knowledge and practice).

An afterword suggests promising areas for future examination and calls for more translations of primary and secondary Japanese sources.

This short summary does little to convey the vast wealth of information offered by Grapard in the volume. *Mountain Mandalas* marks the culmination of many years of research by a scholar of great erudition. The author’s pioneering insights and lengthy translations of primary sources—most (all?) presented for the first time in English—deserve thankful praise. The many other merits of this work need not be detailed here, for they will be obvious upon reading.

One criticism mirrors the central challenge facing the study of Kyushu and Shugendo: a paucity of sources. That said, perhaps because Grapard has been able to amass so much voluminous data, the text often reads as a collage of separate essays rather than a cohesive whole. I will give two examples. One lengthy passage is duplicated word for word in chapter 1 (80–81) and again in chapter 2 (105). “Usa Hachiman’s oracular spatialities” (208–16) in chapter 3, which analyzes and provides partial translation of the fourteenth-century *Hachiman Usagū Gotakusenshū* 八幡宇佐宮御託宣集, was published by GRAPARD as an independent essay in 2003.

Grapard’s liberal blending of time periods as well as archaeological, literary, and historical sources with little clarification and few citations may frustrate readers. And in terms of terminology, this reviewer wonders to what extent

“geotypes” and “chronotypes,” the new vocabulary introduced in chapter 2, contribute to the overall aims of the volume. The author himself deploys them sparingly and inconsistently, seeming to prefer more straightforward terms (“space,” “spatial,” “time,” “temporal”). I found it odd that Grapard scrupulously avoids using the term “religion,” preferring “cult” or “cultic” instead, yet uncritically employs the term “spiritual” on occasion (xii). Finally, the monograph would benefit from an updated bibliography (I provide a list of recent works in the reference list).

In closing, I would like to pick up where Grapard leaves off and introduce several “rays of light” (246) shining down upon the study and practice of Kyushu Shugendo today. At Mt. Hiko, the first fire ritual (*gomataki* 護摩焚き) since the Meiji period was held in 2016, commemorating the four hundredth anniversary of the rebuilding of the main hall (*Hōheiden* 奉幣殿). Two important Kamakura-period icons damaged by the anti-Buddhist movement of the Meiji period, the “True Body of the Hikosan Gongen of the Three Places” (*Hikosan sansho gongen mishōtai* 彦山三所権現御正体) and a standing image of Fudō myōō 不動明王 (Sk. Ācala), were reproduced and enshrined in the altar on this occasion. Tomotari Mikako 知足美加子 of Kyushu University’s Faculty of Design (and a descendant of Mt. Hiko *yamabushi*) created the new icons.<sup>7</sup> Grapard-sensei would surely be delighted to learn of Tomotari’s 3D imaging project as well, which analyzes Buddhist stone reliefs at the mountain. I would also like to mention a fieldwork-based volume on Mt. Hiko edited by SHIRAKAWA Takuma 白川琢磨, professor of cultural anthropology and religious studies at Fukuoka University and chairman of the Mt. Hiko Investigative Guidance Committee (*Hikosan chōsa shidō iinkai* 英彦山調査指導委員会). These undertakings and others will further illuminate the rich world of Shugendo in Kyushu.

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