



Bernard Faure, D. Max Moerman, and Gaynor Sekimori, eds., *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie*, N° 18, 2009: *Shugendō: l'histoire et la culture d'une religion japonaise* [Shugendō: The History and Culture of a Japanese Religion]

Paris: École française d'Extrême-Orient, 2009. 304 pages. Paperback, €40.00/\$60.00/¥6000. ISBN 978-2-85539-123-6.

THIS COLLECTION of essays on Shugendō is a special topical issue of the *Cahier d'Extrême-Asie*, published by the École française d'Extrême-Orient Centre in Kyoto, but it is better to acknowledge it as a monograph rather than “just” an issue of an academic journal. It is the most up-to-date collection of academic studies on the topic in non-Japanese languages, and a milestone for Shugendō studies in the West. The essays are based on papers given at “the first large-scale symposium devoted to Shugendō outside Japan,” which brought together the top specialists in the field at Columbia University in April 2008. The conference was dedicated to Carmen Blacker of the University of Cambridge, a pioneer (or shall we say *sendatsu*) who “opened the mountain” for such studies in the West.

The papers are all in English (with translation of essays originally in French and Japanese), with each essay opening with a summary in French. The translation and editing is of the highest quality, resulting in very readable prose even for essays of quite technical content. In fact, the inclusion and translation of so many essays by many important Japanese scholars is one of the most significant contributions of this collection. I shall briefly introduce each essay and comment on their significance. “Introduction,” Gaynor Sekimori & D. Max Moerman

A brief history and outline of the study of Shugendō in Japan and “abroad,” showing how it is an area that has been relatively neglected in academic studies, but which has been drawing more attention recently. Finally, they point out that that essays have been organized under the themes “Towards a Definition of Contemporary Shugendō (Bouchy, Sekimori), “Shugendō in History” (Miyake, Satō, Sekiguchi, Rambelli), and “The Culture of Shugendō” (Suzuki, Ōuchi, and Suzuki).

Anne Bouchy, “Transformation, Rupture and Continuity: Issues and Options in Contemporary Shugendō” (trans., Jessica Hackett and Katelyn Aronson)

The opening essay by Bouchy is a strong attempt to redefine the meaning of “Shugendō.” Her comment could serve as a summary of the theme of the collection as a whole: “It is clear today that Shugendō is in fact a complex tapestry interweaving its religious, symbolic, and ritual elements with many others: social, economic, political, institutional, ideological, historical, geographical, technical, psychological, and human. Failing to acknowledge the interdependence of all of these elements, or favoring one element above the rest, gives only a partial and

biased vision of Shugendō” (19). Bouchy also takes a concrete look at contemporary Shugendō by considering the “spectacularization” and use of secrecy, and the historical ban of women as well as the increasingly active participation of women today.

Gaynor Sekimori, “Defining Shugendō Past and Present: The ‘Restoration’ of Shugendō at Nikkō and Koshikidake.”

A look at the historical development and recent revival of ritual practices at two traditional Shugendō centers, underscoring the religious role of lay people.

Miyake Hitoshi 宮家準, “Japanese Mountain Religion: Shrines, Temples, and the Development of Shugendō” (trans., Miyabi Yamamoto and Gaynor Sekimori)

Miyake is already famous as a giant in Shugendō studies, and here provides a succinct outline of the history of Shugendō, with a focus on “mountain temples and shrines” (*shaji*, 社寺).

Satō Hiroo 佐藤弘夫, “Changes in the Concept of Mountains in Japan” (trans., Orion Klautau)

This essay traces the various meanings or significance that mountains have carried throughout Japanese history, from the mountain as the dwelling-place of the kami, a place for ascetic practice, the dwelling of the spirits of the dead, as Pure Land, as the “other shore,” as the contemporary location for graveyards, and so forth.

Sekiguchi Makiko 関口真規子, “The Sanbōin Monzeki and its Inception as Head Temple of the Tōzan Group” (trans., Gaynor Sekimori)

Traces the historical development and significance of the Sanbōin Monzeki as the headquarters of one of the two Shugendō organizations, especially its institutionalization from the early seventeenth century.

Fabio Rambelli, “‘Dog-men,’ Craftspeople or Living Buddhas? The Status of *Yamabushi* in Pre-Modern Japanese Society.”

Rambelli enters some delicate territory as he discusses various social roles (especially that of “mediator”) played by *yamabushi* throughout history, from their own normative self-understanding to that of *tengu* and other non-human beings, as artisans and performers, even “living Buddhas.” He concludes that “from their unique position, *yamabushi* were able to mediate among all sections of premodern Japanese society. Here lay the source of both their power (social influence) and the threat they potentially posed to the establishment” (137).

Suzuki Shōei 鈴木昭英, “The Development of *Suijaku* Stories about Zaō Gongen” (trans., Heather Blair)

A fascinating look at the origin and development of Zaō Gongen as a syncretistic deity and bodhisattava. Suzuki also provides details on the iconography and *setsuwa* stories of Zaō. Here, as throughout the collection, color illustrations provide an attractive and informative addition to the essay.

Ōuchi Fumi 大内 典, “The Lotus Repentance Liturgy of Shugendō: Identification from Vocal Arts”

Another innovative and fascinating study. Ōuchi emphasizes the importance of “sound” and “voice,” first looking at the role of sound in the practices of the Aki-no-mine at Haguro. She then traces the development of the traditional contemplative Tendai Lotus Samādhi practice to the more “vocal” repentance ceremony of the *Hokke senbō*, showing “the positive use of physical activities centred on vocalizing... for ritual purposes” (193).

Suzuki Masataka 鈴木正崇, “Kumano Beliefs and *Yudate Kagura* Performance” (trans., Gaynor Sekimori).

Suzuki briefly introduces the *yudate* “boiling water” ritual, discusses the importance of “hot water” in the Kumano area, and shows how this ritual influences the development of certain kinds of *kagura* performance.

This collection also includes a comprehensive bibliography, some further “research notes,” and two detailed book reviews, including that of Max Moerman’s book on *Localizing Paradise: Kumano Pilgrimage and the Religious Landscape of Premodern Japan*.

In short, this collection is a welcome addition to the field of Shugendō studies and related areas such as syncretistic religion (*shinbutsu shūgō* 神仏習合), and Japanese religion as a whole. There are general as well as detailed, specific studies, with many color illustrations, making it accessible and useful to both the general reader and specialist. Kudos are due to the contributors, editors, and translators for providing such an informative and stimulating collection.

Paul L. Swanson
Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture