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A Mountain Set Apart: Female Exclusion, Buddhism,  
and Tradition at Modern Ōminesan, Japan

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
in Asian Languages and Cultures

by

Lindsey Elizabeth DeWitt

2015

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## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

A Mountain Set Apart: Female Exclusion, Buddhism,  
and Tradition at Modern Ōminesan, Japan

by

Lindsey Elizabeth DeWitt

Doctor of Philosophy in Asian Languages and Cultures

University of California, Los Angeles, 2015

Professor William M. Bodiford, Chair

Religious tradition has long dictated the exclusion of women from Sanjōgatake, a sacred peak in the Ōminesan 大峰山 range, southern Nara 奈良 Prefecture. Today, Ōminesan is a place where activities ranging from tourism to religious austerities all recognize, implicitly or explicitly, a “1300-year-old tradition” of female exclusion (*nyonin kekkai* 女人結界, *nyonin kinsei* 女人禁制) from the mountain. At the heart of this study is a constructed tradition—a narrative body of beliefs and practices that often belie or confuse historical and practical substantiation—and the people whose lives interact with that tradition in modern times.

The dissertation features what may be understood as the “afterlives” of ancient histories and legends in the modern life of the mountain’s religious practitioners, residents, and patrons. It examines a diverse range of factors as windows to understanding how the tradition of female exclusion is deployed, challenged, and circumvented. These factors include law and female exclusion (the Meiji

government's legal abolishment of female exclusion in 1872), the process of conferring National Park (1936) and UNESCO World Heritage (2004) status on the peak and its effects, local religious and community management of the peak, individual and collective attempts to contest the ban, precepts and present-day religious practice, and economic and cultural benefits to the region.

The first half of the study scrutinizes different aspects of female exclusion at Sanjōgatake through investigations into boundary lines, state ideologies and goals, cultural imagination (and thus, “imaginings”), and the institutional and administrative configurations that distinguish it specifically as a sacred site off-limits to women. Shifting focus outside the widely accepted dichotomy of male inclusion and female exclusion, the second half of the study considers challenges to the ban by both men and women and explores alternative religious practices, lifestyles, and economies—new realities engendered by exclusion.

Previous studies that mention female exclusion highlight its underlying symbolics and traditional literary accounts within an imaginary and yet self-replicating culture of barring women from certain “traditional” practices and sites. This study grounds such exclusion and its afterlives in a specific place, at specific times, and as affected by specific actors. By evaluating strategies surrounding exclusion and inclusion, highlighting how historical tensions play out, and emphasizing context and agency, I am able to elucidate local epistemologies that produce and maintain a socio-religious environment defined by gender. In doing so, I hope to offer a unique contribution to the study of Japanese religions and a new methodology for understanding the complex relationships between gender and sacred space in Japan.

The dissertation of Lindsey Elizabeth DeWitt is approved.

Gregory Robert Schopen

Carol Ann Bakhos

William M. Bodiford, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2015

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## Abbreviations

Chn.	Chinese
DNK	<i>Dai Nihon kokiroku</i> 大日本古記録
Jpn.	Japanese
NKBT	<i>Nihon koten bungaku taikai</i> 日本古典文学体系
NST	<i>Nihon shisō taikai</i> 日本思想体系
Skt.	Sanskrit
SNKBT	<i>Shin Nihon koten bungaku taikai</i> 新日本古典文学体系
SZKT	<i>Shintei zōho kokushi taikai</i> 新訂増補国史体系
T.	<i>Taishō shinshū daizōkyō</i> 大正新脩大藏經

## Conventions and Usages

Transliteration follows the modified Hepburn system for Japanese (e.g., *Shozan engi*) and Pinyin for Mandarin (e.g., *Yichǔ liùtiě*). I provide Chinese characters throughout the body of the text, and to accord with the source material or printed publication present either “old form characters” (*kyūjitai* 旧字体) or “new form characters” (*shinjitai* 新字体). I convert all years to their approximate Western equivalents.

When a text or the name of buddhas and bodhisattvas names can be given in multiple languages, I provide each with the abbreviations Jpn. (Japanese), Skt. (Sanskrit), and Chn. (Chinese) accompanied by relevant diacritics at first usage. I defer to Japanese pronunciations for Buddhist deities, reflecting the context of the study and the usage Japanese people know the terms by. Buddhist figures and deities are capitalized when they appear as part of a proper noun (e.g., Shōbō Rigen Daishi, Zaō Gongen) and italicized in lower case when they appear alone (e.g., *gongen*).

Following convention, Japanese surnames are placed before personal names or titles, and a connective “no” stands between surname and given name for individuals who lived prior to 1185 (e.g., Fujiwara no Moromichi). Whenever possible, I provide birth and death dates for historical figures. For ease of reading, I provide English translations for many place names (e.g. Mountaintop Zaō Hall instead of Sanjō Zaō dō), organization names, laws and regulations, book, journal, and newspaper article titles in the text body.

Conventional English translations do not accurately describe Japanese referents in all cases. In the case of mountains, such as Ōminesan, I provide the Japanese suffix (e.g., “san,” “zan,” “yama”), but in the first instance alone drop the suffix and use “Mount” for clarification (i.e., Mount Ōmine). “Peak” (*mine* 峯, 峰) denotes a single summit, while “mountain” (*yama* 山) can refer to both a single peak and a collection of peaks. “Temple” used here refers to a place that enshrines buddhas and is managed by Buddhist “clerics” (Buddhists who have entered religious orders or who reside at Buddhist religious sites). “Shrine,” on the other hand, from the Meiji period 明治時代 (1868–1912) refers to a place that enshrines “Shintō” gods.

All translations are my own, unless otherwise noted, and I assume full responsibility for any errors.

## Acknowledgments

From the moment of its conception, sparked in a graduate seminar at UCLA, to the closing words, written on the road in central Bhutan, this dissertation represents a long journey, akin to climbing a mountain. The mountain experience, both in my mind and at Ōminesan, has impacted me in ways I could never have expected and cannot hope to articulate. What I can try to convey, however, is my deep gratitude to the people who have contributed along the way.

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without restraint. To my fellow UCLA graduate students Caleb Carter and TUG, now professors in their own right, I am grateful for our time spent together, whether studying, shooting hoops, or trekking through mountains in Japan and elsewhere in the world.

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To the friends who accompanied me to the mountains, for research and photographic assistance (Ariya Sasaki, Paweł Pachciarek, Shota Nishigaki, Lianca Van Der Merwe, Kristi Eaton, Sebastian Mayer), I sincerely appreciate your help and camaraderie. Finally, my heart overflows to family and friends who believed in me and offered unfailing support for a place and a project so meaningful that it took me far away from home.

## Vita

Lindsey DeWitt received her B.A. in Political Science and Asian Studies from Colorado State University in 2000 and her M.A. in International Studies, Comparative Religion, from the University of Washington in 2004. She conducted research at Ōtani University in Kyoto from 2013–2014 and fieldwork at Dorogawa and Yoshino, Nara Prefecture, from 2013–2015. DeWitt is broadly trained in Buddhist Studies and Japanese religions, both modern and premodern. Her research interests include gender, pilgrimage, monasticism, visual culture, folk studies, religious practices and economies, and the relationship between religion and the state. At the time of publication, DeWitt was holding a one-year appointment at Kyushu University as Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Humanities.

## Introduction

Stone monoliths bearing the inscription “From here [onward] is the women’s restricted zone” (*kore yori nyonin kekkai* 従是女人結界) dot Japan’s mountain landscapes, forbidding women from their sacred sites and verdant slopes. This religious practice, past and present, is part of a larger culture of female exclusion in Japan known as *nyonin kekkai* 女人結界 or *nyonin kinsei* 女人禁制. In 1872 the Meiji 明治 government legally opened all mountain shrines, temples, and trails to women. Female climbers were already permitted at some mountains like Mount Fuji (*Fujisan* 富士山), while others stood recalcitrant. Mount Ōmine (*Ōminesan* 大峯山, literally, “Mountain of Great Peaks”) in Nara 奈良 Prefecture, the subject of this study, lays claim to a continuous 1300-year legacy as a male-access-only sacred peak.<sup>1</sup>

The term “religious tradition” (*shūkyōteki dentō* 宗教的伝統) is ubiquitous at Ōminesan (both a mountain and a mountain range, the name of which is synonymous with its Sanjō Peak [*Sanjōgatake* 山上ヶ岳]); one finds it on signboards and offered in conversation to describe and explain the mountain’s ban on women. Used in this thesis, “tradition” means something transmitted from the past and cultivated in the present.<sup>2</sup> This mode of historical summation presents the practice of restricting access

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<sup>1</sup> Ōminesan refers to both the Ōminesan mountain range (*Ōminesan myaku* 大峯山脈) and the peak Sanjōgatake. Only the latter is off-limits to women. Please note also that custom dictates that the *mine* in this toponym should be written with a variant glyph 峯 instead of 峰, although both readings appear in the literature.

<sup>2</sup> Tradition, drawing from British Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm (1983, 1), denotes a ritually or symbolically meaningful set of practices that seek to instill particular norms of belief or behavior. A large body of literature exists on tradition. See Hobsbawm, ed. Terence O. Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge,

to the peak as ancient and little changed since the time of En no Gyōja 役行者 (634?–701?), a layman who legendarily “founded” the mountain by establishing a panorama of religious practices and beliefs later defined as Shugendō 修験道.<sup>3</sup> Female exclusion may be a deeply submerged relic of the past, but at Ōminesan it is also immediately discernible in the present. Wooden boundary gates and stone pillars stand at the mountain’s four trailheads, accompanied by multilingual signage, warning women against advancing further toward Sanjōgatake’s summit.

The historical and current exclusion of women is but one tradition at

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Cambridgeshire: Cambridge University Press, 1983); and anthropologist Nelson H. Graburn, “What is Tradition?” *Museum Anthropology* 24, no. 2/3 (2001): 6–11.

<sup>3</sup> Shugendō is a practice of spiritual attainment. To parse the characters, it roughly translates as a way (*dō* 道) of a method (*shu* 修) to attain “signs” or “evidence” (*gen* 験)—or, as the *Kōjien* 広辞苑 dictionary gives it, “methods for attaining spiritual signs in the wilderness.” Whether existing under the name “Shugendō” or not, Shugendō-like practices and beliefs have long proliferated in Japan’s mountains. They embrace gods and nature, esoteric Buddhist rituals and deities, and Daoistic elements, all selectively emphasized and locally adapted. As Buddhist studies and Japanese religions scholar Paul Swanson has observed, the appropriation is more fluid than firm: “when the cosmology does not fit the natural formations of the mountains, so much the worse for cosmology...the mountains themselves are the most important.” Swanson, “*Shugendō* and the Yoshino–Kumano Pilgrimage: An Example of Mountain Pilgrimage,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 36, no. 1 (1981): 79. En no Gyōja is revered as the original *shugenja* 修験者 (roughly translated, “a person who attains [spiritual] signs”). *Shugenja* are alternatively referred to as *yamabushi* 山伏 (roughly translated, “one who prostrates in the mountains”). Eighty-two-year-old Mr. Takashi Masutani 増谷孝司 of Dorogawa, former mountain guide and Shugendō practitioner, explains that the character 伏 (*fuseru*, “to prostrate”) of *yamabushi* means that one casts aside humanness and embraces nature as an animal, becoming a dog in the mountains. He also remarked at the time, with a smile, “and that’s why we can be such dogs sometimes” (interview by the author, Dorogawa, August 2, 2015). For studies of En no Gyōja’s mythic career in English, see H. Byron Earhart, “Shugendō, The Traditions of En no Gyōja, and Mikkyō Influence,” in *Studies of Esoteric Buddhism and Tantrism* (Kōyasan: Kōyasan University, 1965); and Linda K. Keenan, “En no gyōja: The legend of a holy man in twelve centuries of Japanese literature” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1989) and “En the Ascetic,” in *Religions of Japan in Practice*, edited by George J. Tanabe, Jr., 343–353 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999). In Japanese, see Zenitani Buhei 銭谷武平, *En no gyōja denki shūsei* 役行者伝記集成 (Osaka: Tōhō Shuppan, 1994); and Miyake Hitoshi 宮家準, *En no gyōja to shugendō no rekishi* 役行者と修験道の歴史 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2000).

Ōminesan, heartland of Japanese mountain religion, and it may appear to be overly emphasized historically for this study. I contend here, however, that female exclusion is a central theme at the mountain, not an appendage or a footnote as it has been treated previously (on the occasion that women's access or activities are treated at all). En no Gyōja himself serves as an excellent example. En no Gyōja has monumental importance in other respects than female exclusion and at other sites beyond Ōminesan, yet the centrality of his mother and her role in the narrative construction of Ōminesan's sacred landscape is imbricated in nearly every aspect of the mountain.

#### Aims and Major Questions

This study seeks to better understand the processes whereby culture, religion, and tradition become mapped onto a physical site, and how those strategies of mapping change over time. Three major aims serve as guides to this end: (1) demythologizing the mountain (that is, the disjuncture between long-held views and actual historical developments); (2) demonstrating how old practices are negotiated and new ways of thinking and acting are adopted; and (3) investigating what agencies determine the new ways of thinking and acting and why they do or do not come into conflict with the mountain's characteristic ban on women, which consistently demands center stage. These objectives are site-specific, explored through attention to extant documentation, religious practices, and ethnographic fieldwork.

The overarching goal is to ultimately move beyond the outmoded yet persistent dichotomy of male inclusion and female exclusion, which does not necessarily drive life at the mountain but is implicit throughout, and in doing so highlight the dynamic nature of religious traditions rather than their fixedness as

single ideas or practices. How does ideology inform practice? Alternatively (and concomitantly), how does practice transfigure ideology? Who constructs and maintains restricted geographies and why? How are gendered spaces articulated and negotiated? What role do women play at Ōminesan beyond their status as *persona non grata*?

Men have trekked Ōminesan's peaks since perhaps the seventh century, forging trails and traditions while also leaving traces that imbue the landscape with mystique.<sup>4</sup> Traditions, like places, change across time and space—this will be emphasized in the following diachronic study, which spans the roughly one hundred years from the late nineteenth century to today. The experiences taken from (mostly) male forays weave a tapestry of contradictions surrounding men and women's interactions. Ōminesan is widely boasted as a culturally specific site—a male religious ascetic's mecca—that must be preserved, and lay and secular parties staunchly support it on these grounds. This type of claim overlooks the fact that in 1970 the bounded realm was moved in order to accommodate tourism and other economic interests, as I discuss in chapter one. In 1997, Ōminesan's institutional authorities decided unanimously to abolish female exclusion for the occasion of En no Gyōja's 1300th Death Anniversary in 2000, yet were indefinitely forestalled by Ōminesan's climbing guilds (*kō* 講), groups of laymen with deep religious and economic ties to the mountain since Japan's Edo period 江戸時代 (1603–1868), the

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<sup>4</sup> Recent studies by Heather Blair on premodern Japan and James Robson on premodern China fruitfully employ the notion of traces to describe the multilayered material and representational processes that contour a site's sacredness. See Blair, *Real and Imagined: the Peak of Gold in Heian Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2015); and Robson, *Power of Place: The Religious Landscape of the Southern Sacred Peak (Nanyue) in Medieval China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

focus of chapter four.<sup>5</sup> These are just two examples raised in this study that reveal female exclusion as a moving target.

### Historiographical Notes

The footsteps forging trails through Ōminesan's peaks and the hands penning notes on its grandeur have been predominantly male. Mountain legend and lore featured male protagonists. The principal message is that men are included and women are excluded. This strict and static dichotomy leaves little room for nuance, however, and ignores the dynamism and movement indicated by historical events. Equally troubling is the male-centric orientation that informs previous scholarship on Ōminesan. Even recent works advocating women's access to Sanjōgatake largely overlook what women can and did do at the mountain. The enduring tendency to view the practice of female exclusion as either an ancient folk tradition or a linear, one-dimensional development in Japan's religious realm obscures historicity and flattens nuance. Structural and symbolic methodologies, which draw from a small group of premodern texts (e.g. hagiography, literature, temple regulations) to explain the origins and development of female exclusion, can by nature say very little concerning reception or actual practice.

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<sup>5</sup> Ōminesan's institutional authorities include three powerful Buddhist temples with Shugendō affiliations (which I list for each following name and location): Kinpusenji 金峯山寺 in Yoshino (*Kinpusen shugen honshū* 金峯山寺修驗本宗), Shōgo'in in Kyoto 聖護院 (*Honzan Shugen shu* 本山修驗宗), and Daigoji in Kyoto 醍醐寺 (*Shingon shu daigoha shugen* 真言宗醍醐派修驗); in addition, five other Buddhist temples collectively manage Ōminesan's affairs and Sanjōgatake's mountaintop temple, Ōminesanji: Ryūsenji 龍泉寺 in Dorogawa 洞川 at the Western base of Sanjōgatake, and Kizō'in 喜蔵院, Chikurin'in 竹林院, Sakuramotobō 桜本坊, and Tōnan'in 東南院 in the Yoshino area to the north (the five temples are collectively referred to as the Goji'in 護持院). Chapter four outlines this complicated institutional arrangement in fuller detail.

I am not in full disagreement with previous approaches, for their inroads and even their shortcomings make the present study possible. We all stand on the shoulders of giants, regardless of whether we consent with their every step. Literary and historical materials are given due consideration, but my purpose lies in articulating how different actors interpret and enact earlier sources in the name of building up and tearing down gender barriers (in both literal and figurative senses). Far from being a bastion of ancient tradition, as it is popularly conceived, female exclusion is examined here as a central axis in a dynamic and ongoing dialogue about people and place. Female exclusion is more of a portal than an edifice—it is a way people understand and negotiate relationships with each other and with space. It is a culture.

#### Female Exclusion as Culture

Just as there is no single mountain called Ōminesan but rather a collection of “great peaks,” as the name implies, so too is there less a uniform entity “female exclusion” than a collection of practices, ranging from sacred space restrictions (e.g., temples, shrines, mountain peaks) to participation in and even reporting on specific events (e.g., sumo wrestling, tunnel openings). Understanding female exclusion in terms of culture helps make sense of this multidimensionality. The term “culture” connotes a plethora of meanings and minefields, and I do not intend to provoke or contribute to such debates. I view culture here as a toolbox of adaptive strategies by which humans negotiate, nurture, and contest ideas and practices, and female exclusion as one of these ideas and practices. As the following pages clarify, female exclusion manifests in multiple forms and performs multiple functions, dependent on context and agency. Therefore, an individual’s explanation for and evaluation of women’s prohibitions

may not necessarily represent the collective.

The collective view at Õminesan, posted on large signboards at each climbing entrance, explains the ban in terms of religion and tradition. In conversation with individuals, however, one will find a wealth of opinions on the matter. Local perspectives (men and women, young and old) are guided by practical concerns such as economics and convenience, not simply religion and tradition. We can demonstrate collective patterns and trends but not exclusively rely upon them, because female exclusion, as a culture, is less a prescriptive formula than a resource or a toolbox, and each individual draws upon different tools.<sup>6</sup> This type of choice reflects what sociologist Ilana Silber describes as “practice and practicability” in the experience of cultural repertoires.<sup>7</sup> Cultural repertoire, as articulated by Silber, emphasizes “individual meaning and agency in mobilizing and choosing a specific configuration of cultural resources, while also stressing the public, and publicly available nature of those resources” (ibid.). Such a conceptualization derives from ethnomethodological concerns à la Harold Garfinkel, who emphasizes rationality and behavior as localized and situational.<sup>8</sup> Applied to the case at hand, we are reminded to moderate macro level speculations with individual explanations of practice and belief, and at the same time acknowledge that individual agency is always also emplaced within larger

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<sup>6</sup> Religion scholar Justin McDaniel’s study of Thai popular religion is a highly insightful model of ethnomethodology in practice. Through the lens of cultural repertoire, McDaniel both accommodates and grants authority to individuals’ contradictions, code switching, rumors, emotions, and other nuances while shedding light on overall patterns in the Thai religious landscape. See McDaniel, *The Lovelorn Ghost and the Magical Monk: Practicing Buddhism in Modern Thailand* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2011).

<sup>7</sup> Ilana Silber, “Pragmatic Sociology as Cultural Sociology: Beyond Repertoire Theory?” *European Journal of Social Theory* 6, no. 4 (2003): 429.

<sup>8</sup> See Harold Garfinkel, *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1967).

narratives.

### Methodological and Conceptual Considerations

My methodological underpinnings are situated at the intersection of a number of disciplines and approaches in the humanities: religion, history, anthropology, geography, and gender studies. Fieldwork conducted in Dorogawa 洞川 and Yoshino 吉野, southern and northern bases of Sanjōgatake, respectively, as well as various locations on or near the Okugake Trail (*Okugake michi* 奥駈道) running along the spine of the Ōminesan range, serve as an indispensable component of my project. I conducted interviews when possible, and visited mountain communities and temple sites regularly.

This not a bid to rescue women from the foot of the mountain, nor is it a platform to criticize men at the top. No specific agenda is advocated, belying the popular (and partially true) opinion that only feminist outsiders take interest in Ōminesan's ongoing prohibition of women. Treading sensitively into rocky territory, in this project I seek to clarify women's and men's religious experiences, illuminate the mundane concerns underlying practice, and emphasize the richness of difference implied and implemented by gender. Whether past or present, temporary or fixed, related to space or occupation, we cannot discuss female exclusion without recourse to gender. This may seem obvious, but it is not a given—in certain scholarly interpretations, female exclusion is presented in such a way that circumvents gender as a central issue. This study emphasizes gender difference as fundamental and ideologically determined, yet also as fluid and adaptable, dependent upon social context (because gender is socially constructed).

American historian Joan Wallach Scott and French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu articulate compelling and complementary conceptions of gender, and I draw from both in broad strokes here.<sup>9</sup> Gender denotes for Scott an element in social relationships based on perceived differences between sexes and implying four constituent elements: (1) culturally available symbols evoking various (and often conflicting) representations; (2) normative concepts that generate interpretations of symbolic meanings and define their metaphoric possibilities; (3) social institutions and organizations including kinship, labor, politics, and education; and (4) a subjective identity. Gender thus represents a dynamic, socially constructed category of analysis and evaluation; a way of signifying relations of power and defining normative conceptions of what is “male” and what is “female.” Gender means difference, but not in a value-neutral sense.

Bourdieu’s contention that all knowledge, practical or otherwise, is rooted in this fundamental operation of division is also instructive here. The invisible yet all too apparent category of gender originates in the division of things, sexual and other, and activities according to the male/female opposition. As a “magical frontier,” gender appears everywhere, traversing the social world from end to end, inscribed in the order of things, the routine and banality of everyday life, and in bodily action (posture, gait, gaze, etc.).<sup>10</sup> The opposition also, and significantly for present interests, materializes in the division of space. The historical and ongoing prohibition of women

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<sup>9</sup> I am not the first to apply Wallach Scott or Bourdieu’s theories on gender to the case of religion in Japan. Bernard Faure, for example, draws from both. See Wallach Scott, *Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis* (Washington: American Historical Association, 1986), esp. 1067–1068; Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992), and *Masculine Domination* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001); and Faure, *The Power of Denial: Buddhism, Purity, and Gender* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003).

<sup>10</sup> Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, 44.

from mountains in Japan like Ōminesan is often explained as a necessary separation between genders. Men enter the peak (*nyūbu* 入峰, *mineiri* 峰入) in a journey of initiation or to seek otherworldly transcendence. Women remain outside and below at the foothills in support roles, but also as unambiguous embodiments of the worldly or vulgar (the widely used term “*sezoku*” 世俗 implies both). Perceived “natural” differences (biological, anatomical, etc.), which are in fact social constructions, operate in a very real sense to symbolically ratify certain properties such as women’s exclusion or obedience, or to legitimate relationships of (male) domination.

This is precisely what East Asian religions scholar Bernard Faure describes as an elliptical “logic of transgression” that symbolically undergirds systemic prohibitions of women.<sup>11</sup> That is, female exclusion sustains the sacredness of the mountain. For Faure, an elliptical process of defining and negotiating sacredness and transgression provides the basis for gender discrimination and exclusion, and female exclusion is one manifestation of a widespread systematization of power.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, supporters of Ōminesan’s ban have long defended it on these grounds.

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<sup>11</sup> Faure, *The Power of Denial*, 245. Discourse on “transgression” and the sacred appears in several works by prominent Western philosophers. French philosopher Georges Bataille, for instance, wrote, “the sacred world depends on limited acts of transgression.” *Eroticism: Death & Sensuality*, trans. Mary Dalwood (San Francisco, CA: City Lights Books, 1986), 68. See also Michel Foucault, ed. and trans. Donald F. Bouchard, “A Preface to Transgression,” in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), 29–52; and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, trans. A.V. Miller, *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977). Faure is the first to my knowledge to apply it to the Buddhist context, in the case of not only female exclusion but also gender and sexuality more broadly. See also Faure, *The Red Thread: Buddhist Approaches to Sexuality* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998).

<sup>12</sup> Evaluating Faure’s symbolic observations in the case of Ōminesan brings mixed results. The appeal of climbing Sanjōgatake in part draws from female exclusion, and yet is increasingly strangled by it. The major consequence of women being allowed access to the mountain, many supporters of the ban argue, is the demise of Ōminesan’s status as special, unique, and exclusive. At the same time, status does little in the immediacy to provide sustenance for local people, and it is in this sense

Gender exists everywhere, at all times, and in many shapes. The ways in which people embody and negotiate gender depend on constituency (individual and collective) and context—women’s and men’s religious experiences (of exclusion, inclusion, and everything in between) are as diverse as the people who experience them.<sup>13</sup> By focusing on female exclusion at Ōminesan, I aim to illuminate one strategy that relates to gender and has a historical context, engaging it from new vantage points and *in situ* in order to refine our understanding of the phenomenon and its diverse transfigurations.

*Nyonin kinsei, nyonin kekkai*

Female exclusion is generally conceptualized in terms of two similar-sounding four-character phrases: *nyonin kekkai* 女人結界 and *nyonin kinsei* 女人禁制. The word *nyonin* is a Chinese term found in Buddhist texts referring to “female human” or women. The words *kekkai* and *kinsei* both refer to types of restriction. While these two terms are often used interchangeably today, etymologically and in historical contexts they convey very different meanings.

*Kekkai* (Skt. *sīmā*) is a term signifying religious regulations. In the Buddhist

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that the ban on women actually stifles local communities. Dorogawa and Yoshino residents face depopulation and economic decline, and have turned to tourism as their primary means of survival. If women were allowed, would the situation improve? Perspectives on this, like all other matters concerning women’s prohibitions, are polarized in these communities. Some propose that lay guilds of men, who play an integral role in Dorogawa’s founding, would stop supporting the town. Others argue that tourism would significantly increase if women were welcomed at Sanjōgatake.

<sup>13</sup> Art historian Chino Kaori’s 千野香織 “dual binary” structure of gender offers insight here. Gender refers to socially established differentiation, yet it is not inherently linked with one sex or the other. Sex, on the other hand, is often defined by genitalia. Chino’s keen observation helps us to rule out any definitive idea of male or female. See Kaori’s “Gender in Japanese Art,” in *Gender and Power in the Japanese Visual Field*, edited by Joshua S. Mostow, Norman Bryson, and Maribeth Graybill, 17–34 (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2003), esp. 19–21.

context, it represents the establishment of a ritually proscribed zone or bounded area, such as a temple complex or an altar. The space set apart by a *kekai* can be temporary or permanent, and is accessible to only a specific person or group of people for religious purposes. At certain Buddhist sites in Japan, India, Burma, and Sri Lanka, for example, *kekai* prohibit women, as well as lay or non-religious men in some cases, from entering specific areas and conducting religious practices in those areas. *Kekai* often distinguish a temple complex and its clerics, who are bound by their observance of strict Buddhist precepts. Gender has no direct bearing on *kekai* in this context. *Kinsei* holds the general meaning of “ban,” the prohibiting of certain acts. It too can be found in the Buddhist canon, although with much less frequency, and also has no direct correlation to gender.

In Japan, women’s temporary ritual exclusion (e.g., Buddhist rituals held at a temple complex, household or village rituals involving gods) at some point gave way to women’s permanent exclusion from shrines and temples, sumo wrestling platforms, festival floats (although this has recently changed), kiln firing, and hunting and fishing practices. There is great variety and nuance within each of these examples, and they cannot be understood out of context.

The Buddhist notion of “restricted zone” (*kekai*) at some point becomes linked with purity and pollution discourses in Japan, specifically the avoidance of or taboo against matters deemed “dirty” (*kegare* 汚れ) or “impure” (*fujō* 不浄). The forms of blood pollution women alone embody—menstruation and childbirth—become particularly acute aversions. The origins of female impurity, like the origins of female exclusion, are very hard to pin down. Historian Katsuura Noriko 勝浦令子 locates the emergence of female-centric pollution in Japan’s sixth century and argues that it was highly influenced by continental ideas drawn from Confucianism, Daoistic

streams (e.g., *yin-yang*, the five elements), and Esoteric Buddhism.<sup>14</sup> Eighth-century legal codes, based on Chinese models, stipulate provisions for different degrees of abstinence (*imi* 齋) from impure matters such as birth, death, sickness, and meat eating. Prescribed taboos against these and other matters, which came to include menstruation and pregnancy, proliferate in Heian-period literature such as the early tenth-century book of laws and customs, *Engishiki* 延喜式 (*Procedures of the Engi era*). Significantly, however, these early sources describe only temporary prohibitions, not the permanent spatial restrictions that develop thereafter and form the bedrock of female exclusion.

Historian Taira Masayuki 平雅行 differentiates women's permanent exclusion from early notions of female pollution that were periodic and accompanied menstruation, childbirth, and pregnancy.<sup>15</sup> Pollution as part of female existence fundamentally differs, yet the two became conflated. Taira locates the genesis of permanent female exclusion in the context of Kamakura-period 鎌倉時代 (1185–1333) debates about women's salvation, and views it as a vestige of certain philosophical discourses. In terms of location, Taira suggests that monks could better ensure protection for people in cities by performing rituals in mountains, which were considered pure sources of nature.

The major Buddhist discourses concerned here are the “five hindrances” (*goshō* 五障) and “male transformation” (*henjō nanshi* 變成男子) theory. As described in the “Devadatta” chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra* (Skt. *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*

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<sup>14</sup> Katsuura Noriko 勝浦令子, “Women and Views of Pollution,” *Acta Asiatica* 97 (2009): 26.

<sup>15</sup> Taira Masayuki 平雅行, *Nihon chūsei no shakai to Bukkyō* 日本中世の社会と仏教 (Tokyo: Hanawa Shobō, 1992), 390.

*sūtra*, Jpn. *Hokkekyō* 法華經), the five hindrances indicates the inability of women to become the five highest positions in the Buddhist pantheon: Brahma king, Śakra, Marā king, wheel-turning king, or buddha.<sup>16</sup> The context of the story is the well-known account of the Dragon King's daughter, an eight-year-old girl who has in an instant attained enlightenment. Śāriputra, one of the Buddha's chief disciples, doubts this feat, claiming that a woman's body is "filthy and not a vessel of the Law," and is thus subject to these Five Obstructions.<sup>17</sup>

Male transformation appears in the same chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra* shortly thereafter, when the text describes the girl becoming a buddha: "At that moment the entire congregation saw the Dragon King's daughter suddenly transformed into a male, perfect in bodhisattva-deeds."<sup>18</sup> A similar description appears in the *Sūtra of Immeasurable Life* (Skt. *Sukhvātivvyūha Sūtra*, Jpn. *Bussetsu muryōjukyō* 佛說無量壽經) within the Buddha Amitābha's (Jpn. *Amida nyorai* 阿彌陀如来) thirty-fifth vow:

When I have obtained buddhahood, women in the limitless and unfathomable Buddha-worlds will hear my name and be awakened in faith and joyful aspiration. Turning minds toward bodhi, they will loathe their evil female bodies and if, after the end of that life, they again take female form, may I not attain enlightenment.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Katō Bunnō, with William Edward Soothill, *The Threefold Lotus Sutra* (New York, NY: Weatherhill, 1975), 135. The original text can be found at T.9.0262, p. 35, c06.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. Also, T.9.0262, p. 35, c06. The original text reads: 女身垢穢 非是法器.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. Also, T.9.0262, p. 35, c16. The original text reads: 當時眾會 皆見龍女忽然之間變成男子 具菩薩行.

<sup>19</sup> T.12.360, p. 268, c21–24. Modern translations vary considerably in their translations of this passage. F. Max Mueller's translation reads:

O Bhagavat, if, after I have obtained Bodhi, women in immeasurable, innumerable, inconceivable, incomparable, immense Buddha countries on

設我得佛 十方無量不可思議諸佛世界 其有女人 聞我名字 歡喜  
信樂 發菩提心 厭惡女身 壽終之後 復為女像者 不取正覺

The implication of these scriptural passages is the stipulation that the shedding of the female form is requisite if one is to attain enlightenment.

Owing to the immense popularity of the *Lotus Sūtra* in Japan, it is not surprising that either idea became a topic of debate among literate intellectuals and monks. Ritual concerns with impurity (*kegare* 穢れ) trace back to ancient times in Japan, as I note above. In the medieval period, however, ideas about specific forms of impurity, largely informed by Buddhist texts, spread beyond the monastery walls to the broader society. This happened through a variety of media, such as images, texts, and sermons.

Other scholars seek the origins of female exclusion in Buddhist precepts. This approach is championed by historian Ushiyama Yoshiyuki 牛山佳幸, who traces female exclusion to the earliest organized monastic communities in sixth-century Japan.<sup>20</sup> According to Ushiyama, the practice emerged from Buddhist monastic rules (Skt. *vinaya*, Jpn. *ritsu* 律) in India that prohibit monks and nuns from engaging in sexual relations and restrict women from freely entering men's training sites and vice

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all sides, after having heard my name, should allow carelessness to arise, should not turn their thoughts towards Bodhi, should, when they are free from birth, not despise their female nature; and if they, being born again, should assume a second female nature, then may I not obtain the highest perfect knowledge.

Mueller, "The Larger Sukhāvātīvyūha Sūtra (or The Sutra on the Buddha of Eternal Life)," available online at <http://huntingtonarchive.osu.edu/resources/downloads/sutras/04amitabhaPureland/SV%20Long.doc.pdf> (accessed November 10, 2015).

<sup>20</sup> See Ushiyama, "The Historical Development of the Exclusion of Women from Sacred Places (*Nyonin Kinzei*) in Japan," *Acta Asiatica* 97 (2009), 39–55; "Nyonin kinsei sairon" 女人禁制再論, *Sangaku shugen* 山岳修驗 17 (November 1996): 1–11; and *Kodai chūsei jiin soshiki no kenkyū* 古代中世寺院組織の研究 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1990).

versa. Such a line of reasoning locates the origins of women’s restrictions in two passages from the no-longer-extant *Sōniryō* 僧尼令 (*Code for monks and nuns*), an early monastic code of conduct in Japan.<sup>21</sup> Concurrent male and female prohibitions initially developed on parallel trajectories, Ushiyama argues, yet this changed in Japan after the tenth century, when most of the major Buddhist temples came to be

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<sup>21</sup> The *Sōniryō* appears as part of the civil regulations of the *Taihō code* (*Taihō ritsuryō* 大宝律令 701–704 promulgation, 703 enactment) and the *Yōrō code* (*Yōrō ritsuryō* 養老律令, 717/718 promulgation, 757 enactment). Neither code is extant, however, and portions of the *Sōniryō* only survive in two ninth-century texts, the *Ryō no gige* (*Explanation of the code*, 833 enactment) and the *Ryō no shuge* 令集解 (*Compilations of the code*, 868 compilation), two commentaries on the *Yōrō code*. There remains a great deal of speculation surrounding these texts. The *Sōniryō* is comprised of twenty-seven articles, a series of regulations concerning the behavior, appearance, and bureaucratic administration of monastic communities, as well as punishments for offences. Article eleven, “Article prohibiting women” (*Tei fujō jō* 停婦女条), stipulates that monks must not allow women to stay in their dwelling place and nuns must not provide accommodation for men in theirs.

As a rule at temples, at monks’ quarters women are prohibited and at nuns’ quarters men are prohibited. If [a man or woman] stays for longer than one night, that person at fault will be imposed ten days of hard labor. Exceeding five days, they will be imposed thirty days of hard labor. Exceeding ten days, they will be imposed one hundred days of hard labor. If the three administrators know and it is allowed, they will be treated the same as the person at fault. *Sōniryō*, article 11, *NST*, 3:218.

凡寺 僧房停婦女 尼房停男夫 經一宿以上 其所由人 十日苦使 五日以上 冊日苦使 十日以上 百日苦使 三綱知而聽者 同所由人罪

Article twelve, “Article prohibiting entry into convents” (*Futoku chō nyū niji jō* 不得輒入尼寺条), forbids monks and nuns from entering monastery or nunnery except under extenuating circumstances.

As a rule, monks are not able to enter nunneries, and nuns are not able to enter monasteries. Visiting the head master is permissible in cases of death and sickness, purification, pious acts, and study. *Ibid*.

凡僧不得輒入尼寺 尼不得輒入僧寺 其有覲省師主 及死病看問 齋戒功德 聽學者聽

For more on the *Sōniryō* and early legal codes in Japan, see Futaba Kenkō 二葉憲香, *Kodai Bukkyō shisō shi kenkyū* 古代佛教思想史研究 (Kyoto: Nagata Bunshōdō, 1962), esp. 167–176. In English, the reader can consult David T. Bialock, *Eccentric Spaces, Hidden Histories: Narrative, Ritual, and Royal Authority from the Chronicles of Japan to The Tale of the Heike* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), esp. 92–95; and Herman Ooms, *Imperial Politics and Symbolics in Ancient Japan: The Tenmu Dynasty, 650-800* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2009), esp. 147–151.

managed and inhabited solely by male monks.

Excerpts from *Sōniryō* do stipulate divisions based on gender, but in no way do they state or imply a hierarchy or one-sidedness that would provide a basis for women's permanent exclusion. In fact, nuns in India were required to spend rain retreats under the protection of monks for safety reasons, so at least on this occasion they would have been living in close proximity to the monasteries. Furthermore, women were also ordained twice—once in the monks' order (Skt. *bhikṣusaṃgha*, Jpn. *bikushu* 比丘衆) and a second time in the nuns' order (Skt. *bhikṣuṇīsaṃgha*, Jpn. *bikunishu* 比丘尼衆)—and monks frequently preached to nuns. Rather than a strict separation between men and women, then, there was actually rather a lot of contact between the two communities. In my view, the notion that women's permanent exclusion from sacred sites was engendered by traditional Buddhist precepts represents a narrow and incomplete interpretation of history and religious practice.

On the other hand, Ushiyama's contention that *kekai* and *kinsei* must be considered as discrete entities, lest we conflate a Buddhist ritual term with a less specific word reflecting prohibition, is well taken.<sup>22</sup> The four-character phrase *nyonin kinsei* appears in temple regulations from Kōryūji 興隆寺 in Suō 周防 Province in the year 1475.<sup>23</sup> It can also be found in a fifteenth-century version of the Nō 能 play *Chikubushima* 竹生島.<sup>24</sup> *Nyonin kekai*, on the other hand, is noted in the

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<sup>22</sup> Ushiyama, "The Historical Development of the Exclusion of Women from Sacred Places (*Nyonin Kinzei*) in Japan," 39.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 39–55.

<sup>24</sup> *Chikubushima*, performed in a style of puppet theatre called *gidayū* 義太夫 (known for its chanting style of narration), tells the story of a male retainer traveling to the sacred island of Chikubu. He travels across Lake Biwa to the island with an old fisherman and a young woman. Upon arriving, the retainer queries whether the shrine, like many others, prohibits women from visiting. The old man tells the retainer that

*Uraminosuke* 恨之介, a seventeenth-century literary work, and the *Seisuishō* 醒睡笑 (1628), a collection of humorous tales.

The terminological ambiguities I outline in brief above generate misunderstandings (and misgivings) about the conceptual and historical dimensions of female exclusion. Suzuki Masataka 鈴木正孝, a scholar of cultural anthropology, folklore, and religious studies, observes a “pressing need to find a strategy which appeals to what the global and local have in common and rescue diverse opinions by looking critically at the discourse.”<sup>25</sup> I defer to English renderings throughout for the sake of readability, but in Japanese my preference lies with *kinsei*. It reflects current usage and conceptually embraces a broad repertoire of related practices and beliefs without privileging the discussion toward Buddhism (or any other single religious stream, for that matter). *Kinsei* need not reflect personal views on the topic in an evaluative sense, only its widespread acceptance in the Japanese lexicon.

### Mountains as Sacred Space

Many studies of Japanese religion observe the significance of mountains and understand their importance in a wide range of practices and symbolics. Mountains

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the shrine is devoted to Benzaiten 弁財天 (also 辯才天; Skt. Sarasvatī) a goddess reborn of the Buddha who possesses unlimited mercy that extends to all, including and especially women. The young woman acknowledges this to be true. At this moment in the play, the narrator/reciters reveal that the old fisherman and the young woman are not human—the old man is the spirit of the lake (dragon king) and the woman the embodiment of Benzaiten. Benzaiten, worshiped in Japan as a protector deity since the introduction of the *Sutra of Golden Light* (Skt. *Suvarṇaprabhāsa Sūtra*, Jpn. *Konkōmyō saishō kyō* 金光明最勝王經) in the eighth century, is also enshrined at a large shrine in Tenkawa Village 天川村 (about twenty minutes west by car today from Dorogawa) and according to some legends reputed to be the earliest guide for En no Gyōja (see chapter one). Royall Tyler, *Japanese Nō Dramas* (London: Penguin Books, 1992), esp. 58–67.

<sup>25</sup> Suzuki Masataka 鈴木正孝, “Sangaku shinkō to jendā” 山岳信仰とジェンダー, *Sangaku shugen* 山岳修験 19 (2007): 68.

were regarded as otherworldly realms in Japan and elsewhere. In Japanese religionist Alan Grapard's words they were "space[s] of death" inhabited by powerful gods into which only extra-ordinary people ventured.<sup>26</sup> The *Nihon ryōiki* 日本靈異記 (*Numinous and strange records from Japan*), a ninth-century collection of Buddhist tales, describes Mount Ishizuchi (*Ishizuchisan* 石鎚山) in Shikoku 四国 (still partially off-limits to women today) as a "mountain, high and steep, [that] no ordinary person can climb. However, a person whose actions are pure, and only such a person, is able to climb it and dwell there."<sup>27</sup> Much of how ordinary people conceived of and interacted with sacred mountains in ancient Japan remains a mystery, but in general terms we can say that mountains were considered to be physical embodiments of the sacred (*sei* 聖) vis-à-vis the worldliness (*zoku* 俗) of the valley and villages below.<sup>28</sup>

Another popular view put forth by scholars of folk religion like Hori Ichirō 堀一郎 depicts mountains as abodes of powerful female gods, or "divine mothers."<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Alan Grapard, "Flying Mountains and Walkers of Emptiness: Toward a Definition of Sacred Space in Japanese Religions" *History of Religions* 21 (1981): 200.

<sup>27</sup> *Nihon ryōiki* 日本靈異記 (NKBT 70), 449. See also Satō Hirō 佐藤弘夫, trans. Orion Klautau, "Changes in the Concept of Mountains in Japan," in *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie, N° 18: Shugendō: l'histoire et la culture d'une religion japonaise* [*Shugendō: The History and Culture of a Japanese Religion*], edited by Bernard Faure, D. Max Moerman, and Gaynor Sekimori, 89–102 (Paris: École française d'Extrême-Orient); and Keikai 景戒, trans. Kyoko Motomochi Nakamura, *Miraculous Stories from the Japanese Buddhist Tradition: the Nihon Ryoiki of the Monk Kyokai* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973).

<sup>28</sup> Grapard, noting further, "the ritual significance of the act of binding in Japanese culture is still not well understood, [but] it seems to be related to early cycles of fertility and production which were also called *musubi* 結." Nevertheless, he still argues that sacred sites were being ritually defined and bound (*musubu* 結ぶ) by the mid Heian period, although such demarcations were often temporary. "Flying Mountains," 19.

<sup>29</sup> Hori Ichirō 堀一郎, "Mountains and Their Importance for the Idea of the Other World in Japanese Folk Religion" *History of Religions* 6, no. 1 (Aug. 1966): 16.

Female mountain gods, according to Hori, bestow agricultural fertility in the form of watersheds, offer safe childbirth, reward hunters with plentiful game, and grant permission for built landscapes. They simultaneously carry destructive powers such as the ability to manipulate weather and seismic activity. Turbulent weather in the mountains was regarded as a sign that a woman had entered into the jealous female god's realm. This popular adage can still be heard in Dorogawa today, although often with a hint of jest.

At Ōminesan in particular, the rise of esoteric Buddhist discourses and the emergence of ascetic religious practices also led to what Grapard refers to as the mandalization of mountains—a collapsed distinction between human and godly realms. The *Shozan engi* 諸山縁起 (*Origins of Various Mountains*, ca. 1185), a collection of mountain-related tales, identifies Ōminesan as the sacred liminal space between Yoshino, conceived as the Womb World (*taizōkai* 胎藏界) and Kumano 熊野, conceived as the Diamond World (*kongōkai* 金剛界). As Buddhist and other religious discourses articulated the parameters of sacred space in the mountains, religious practitioners began to embark in increasing numbers on pilgrimages to places like Ōminesan. Their repeated journeys reaffirmed the sacrality of its mountainous terrain and continually re-shaped practices and ideas pertaining to female exclusion.

#### Local Perspectives on Female Exclusion

Finally, it will be helpful at the outset to sketch in broad strokes some different local perspectives on female exclusion. In addition to “tradition,” local people in Dorogawa and Yoshino tend to emphasize gender “distinction” (*kubetsu* 区別) and eschew

gender “discrimination” (*sabetsu* 差別).<sup>30</sup> It is impossible to reduce the small town of Dorogawa (today, site of the main climbing entrance for Sanjōgatake) to a single voice or perspective. Fieldwork reveals all manner of opinions on the issue, and even individual perspectives exhibit a degree of flexibility depending on the situation.<sup>31</sup> In a general and collective sense, however, most local women and men support the ban. Dorogawa women in particular have historically been strong supporters of female exclusion.<sup>32</sup>

An eighty-three-year-old female shopkeeper born and raised in Dorogawa, always generous with conversation and local specialty arrowroot tea, describes the mountain’s ban on women as “strange” (*okashii* おかしい), stated with a slightly

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<sup>30</sup> As mentioned above, we must also consider female exclusion in terms of matters pertaining to female blood pollution—that is, menstruation and childbirth—and the notion that women hinder men’s religious training and advancement.

<sup>31</sup> In August 2015, I conducted interviews with the assistance of two male friends, one Japanese and one Polish. To my surprise, when these other men were present (one of whom is a native speaker and worked at an inn in Dorogawa during high school), the same interviewees who in prior sessions with me alone explained female exclusion in terms of a necessary gender separation set in order that men could attain purity of body and mind at the peak and return with a renewed sense of appreciation for their wives and families, on this occasion they offered more vulgar explanations (e.g., men needing a break from nagging wives, men climbing the mountain in order to indulge in worldly pleasures of spirits and flesh upon their descent, men not wanting women to see the dire condition of mountaintop lodges).

<sup>32</sup> Although dated, a 1978 survey offers valuable insight into popular perspectives that my fieldwork corroborates. The Osaka Public Hearings Division (*Ōsaka fu kōchōka* 大阪府公聴課) conducted a survey on women’s status titled, “On Women’s Empowerment” (*Fujin no chii kōjō ni tsuite* 婦人の地位向上について), and published the results in the paper *Yomiuri shinbun* 読売新聞 with the headline, “Youths a group resigned to older people’s liberal ethos” (*Wakamono ni akiramegumi, kōreisha ni riberarisuto no kippu* 若者にあきらめ組、高齢車にリベラリストの気風). The survey targeted two thousand men and women, and included a question about female exclusion. The top response of women of all ages was that it “cannot be helped because it is custom” (*shūkan dakara shikata ga nai* 習慣だから仕方がない). 51.1% of men in their fifties found it “unreasonable” (*fugōri* 不合理), and 34.6% answered “cannot be helped” (*shikata ga nai* 仕方がない). For men in their twenties, 47.1% marked “cannot be helped” and 39% marked “unreasonable.” *Yomiuri shinbun*, February 25, 1978.

contemptuous tone. Yet she has complied with it her whole life and would only climb the forbidden peak on two conditions: if she were able-bodied and if the ban on women was lifted. For many local women, their exclusion is naturalized and learned as a matter of course, not something worth pondering.<sup>33</sup> Another local woman, in her early forties, explains that Ōminesan represents a special and rare cultural heritage in an increasingly secular society precisely because it is a mountain for men only. She believes this is worth protecting and preserving for her children. Shugendō scholar and practitioner Gaynor Sekimori substantiates these observations in a short article on female exclusion at Ōminesan, one of the few Western-language reports on the topic to date.<sup>34</sup> Sekimori cites a small booklet of essays written by Dorogawa women. According to one woman's view, "Ōminesan should always remain closed to women. This is how it has been since I was born and how I have always thought. It is not a question of discrimination against women, or contempt for women (if it was, how could I as a woman allow my bones to rest here?)"<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Generally speaking, the same goes for women of other villages who marry into Dorogawa families—it would have been (and according to my research still is for many) inconceivable to raise objections to it. In small mountain villages like Dorogawa, observing social customs and rules has always been crucial to the collective livelihood. General cooperation and congruence within and between villages historically depended upon individual compliance. Dorogawa is an extremely close-knit (and closed off according to some) community. Much has changed in Dorogawa over the past one hundred years, yet certain customs remain. In addition to women's exclusion from Sanjōgatake, it is still considered taboo for women to marry outside the village. As Kyōtani explained, if family ties with other villages become mixed they will be deprived of their assets ("zaisan ga ubawarete shimau" 財産が奪われてしまう). Kyōtani Tomoaki 京谷友明, interview by the author, Dorogawa, August 3, 2015. Kishida also notes this in *Yamato shugendō Ōmine sanroku dorogawa no minzoku*, 61–64.

<sup>34</sup> Gaynor Sekimori, "Sacralizing the Border: The Engendering of Liminal Space," *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan* 4, no. 20 (2006): 68.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

In conversations with priests and local people alike, one often hears Ōminesan likened to Mount Athos, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Greece that also prohibits women on its slopes for religious reasons.<sup>36</sup> Athos lays claim to a prohibition on women reaching back to the ninth century, purportedly a decision of Byzantine emperors to create an abode for monks only. Priests at the mountain, which is located on a peninsula in southeast Greece, claim that Jesus' mother, Mary, set the prohibition herself. As at Ōminesan, any man—religiously affiliated or not—is welcome to visit Athos. Unlike Ōminesan, however, the entry policy at Athos is more rigorous, requiring visitors to reserve a travel date with the Mount Athos Pilgrim's Bureau.

Looking beyond traditional arguments, however, Kyōtani Tomoaki 京谷友明, head of the Tenkawa Study Club (*Tenkawa o manabu kai* 天川を学ぶ会), and many other local people I spoke openly admit that the biggest reason to maintain the policy of female exclusion at Sanjōgatake is protection of the local economy. Kyōtani estimates that about 50% of local people oppose the mountain opening because they think it will threaten the local economy.<sup>37</sup> *Yamabushi* groups comprise the “top customers” in Dorogawa—the town and its inns first emerged as a support site for male pilgrims in the Edo period, as chapter one discusses—and if those groups abandon the town it will hold dire consequences for daily life.

The local innkeepers' association and many individual residents maintain this view today, but patterns of support seem to be changing. Guilds of laymen are visiting

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<sup>36</sup> In 2003, a European Parliament resolution initiated by the Dutch court declared that Athos' no-women policy was a violation of human rights, but the Greek government defended it, stating that the ban was confirmed in the treaty of Greece's incorporation into the European Union. See, for example, Sergey Stepanov, “Athos and Women: Different Opinions,” *Europaica Bulletin*, no. 8 (February 8, 2003): <http://orthodoxeurope.org/page/14/15.aspx> (accessed October 1, 2015).

<sup>37</sup> Kyōtani, interview by the author, Dorogawa, August 2, 2015.

with less frequency every year. Mr. Hiromichi Kino 紀埜弘道, seventh-generation proprietor of Dorogawa inn Kinokuniya Jinpachi 紀ノ国屋甚八, for one, has noticed a dramatic decline over his lifetime.<sup>38</sup> The spiritual vigor of visiting men is also on the decline, according to eighty-two-year-old Mr. Takashi Masutani 増谷孝司 of Dorogawa, former mountain guide and community elder. “In the past, we conducted ascetic training in a harsh environment, waking up at midnight and departing [for Sanjōgatake] at one in the morning.” “Now they have become lenient, waking at five in the morning and departing at six...their ‘conduct of heart’ (*kokoro no gyō* 心の行) is lacking.”<sup>39</sup> Attitudes toward female exclusion and religious life at Ōminesan are neither straightforward nor simple. The tradition itself is not static or monological, as this study seeks to demonstrate.

## Chapter Overview

Each chapter of this study on Ōminesan and its ongoing exclusion of women will draw on alternative accountings of history to present a rich and nuanced picture of this mountain set apart. The first four chapters clarify the landscapes, legalities, and legacies connected to Ōminesan and female exclusion. The first chapter is about mapping and routes—how and where Ōminesan’s geographical and cultural terrains are set apart. It sketches a panoramic view of the mountain, both as it appears in ancient legends and in the late twentieth century, when authorities at the mountain decided reduce the scope of Sanjōgatake’s bounded realm.

Chapters two and three draw out female exclusion from murky folk repertoires, tracing its historical development at Ōminesan from the late nineteenth

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<sup>38</sup> Hiromichi Kino 紀埜弘道, personal communication, September 2014.

<sup>39</sup> Takashi Masutani 増谷孝司, interview by the author, Dorogawa, August 2, 2015.

century. Chapter two surveys the legal abolition of women's exclusion from mountain sites in 1872 by an edict of the Meiji government. I trace the edict's promulgation and reception at Mount Hiei (*Hieizan* 比叡山) and Mount Kōya (*Kōyasan* 高野山), respectively, providing comparative insight and filling in gaps where sources are not forthcoming at Ōminesan. Chapter three shifts gears to consider the vision of Ōminesan crafted in the 1936 Yoshino–Kumano National Park and the 2004 “Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range” UNESCO World Heritage Site designations and investigates the curious absence of female exclusion from the “official line” of each. These modern cultural imaginings shape perceptions of Ōminesan, but practical considerations are decided by an intricate management system comprised of temple, lay, and local authorities, whose views on tradition are not always congruent. This is the focus of chapter four.

Women contribute to culture in meaningful ways even when they are excluded. Therefore, the second part of the dissertation shifts the focus to inclusion, redirecting attention to an obvious yet overlooked aspect of religion at Ōminesan: women. Chapters five and six endow women with voices and draw attention to their active and inclusive roles at the mountain. As every historian knows, rules may be codified to prevent transgression, but they are also evidence for that transgression. Women have likely been climbing Sanjōgatake and other peaks in the Ōminesan range for centuries, perhaps millennia, despite religious restrictions and also because of them. Chapter five gives shape and form to this estimation in a series of vignettes that introduce women and men who publicly challenged the tradition in the twentieth century. I also contend that new vistas open when we move beyond the official line of “female exclusion” to consider women's alternative religious practices, and address

some of these in chapter six. Women's roles in Ōminesan's religious landscape may occupy a less visible space than men's, but they hold no less significance.

Viewed individually, each chapter sheds new light on an important subject that has not yet received adequate attention in the religious studies literature. As a whole, they document the vicissitudes of a lived, dynamic religious tradition in Japan that in popular and academic viewpoints has been regarded as fixed in time.

## Chapter One: Drawing Lines

In autumn, the maple and cherry trees at Mount Yoshino (*Yoshinoyama* 吉野山) in southern Nara Prefecture turn brilliant shades of gold and crimson. The sight has been celebrated since ancient times, and attracts large numbers of pilgrims and tourists each year. In late October 1969, a small assembly of priests, villagers, and businessmen—all of them male—gathered at the mountain. Their aim, however, was not to enjoy the splendor of its landscape but to renegotiate the boundary lines demarcating the peak Sanjōgatake as off-limits to women.

Sanjōgatake is situated fourteen kilometers south of Yoshino as part of the fifty-kilometer Ōminesan range, about a day's walk through primeval and plantation forests along a route known today as the Ōmine Okugake Trail (Figures 1.1, 1.2). The mountain honors a 1300-year legacy of female exclusion, a practice traditionally attributed to En no Gyōja, the founding father of Japanese mountain religion, or Shugendō (Figure 1.3). Representations of En no Gyōja are richly imagined and iconic throughout Japan, depicting him as a white-haired and long-bearded ascetic pioneer. At Ōminesan, he holds special reverence, for it is here that he purportedly raised up the fierce god Zaō Gongen 蔵王権現 from Sanjōgatake's craggy peak. En no Gyōja's prolonged (and paradigmatic) ascetic training in these mountains—secluding himself in caves, meditating under waterfalls, and making long journeys through perilous peaks, among other practices—caused his mother great concern. Determined to visit her son, En no Gyōja's mother, Shiratōme 白専女, embarked upon her own journey to Sanjōgatake. As she walked along the River of Heaven (*Tenkawa* 天川, *Ten no kawa* 天ノ川) in present-day Dorogawa 洞川, Tenkawa

Village 天川村, a big snake emerged from a cave where En no Gyōja had once trained and blocked her from going further. Ōminesan authorities and local people hold that this legendary encounter gave rise to the mountain's ban on women.

Fast-forward to the autumn of 1969. The group of Ōminesan authorities were reevaluating Sanjōgatake's restricted realm, long mapped according to lore, in terms of less mystical affairs: industrial development, tourism, and sport climbing. Japan faced serious forestry problems following the Second World War, and Dorogawa residents expressed a need for more female workers in mountain-related jobs, such as maintaining the undergrowth of newly afforested areas within the restricted realm.<sup>1</sup>

Tourists increasingly came by bus to the Dorogawa trailhead, but the area was prohibited to women beyond the Mother's Hall (*Hahakodō* 母公堂), the site that marks Shiratōme's encounter with the snake and enshrines her today as a female mountain deity offering protection in childbirth (Figure 1.4). Religious restrictions obliged female guides to disembark at this point, forcing male drivers to navigate the final two kilometers of the precipitous road leading to the mountaintop alone. If a vehicle approached from the opposite direction, the driver sometimes had to reverse a long distance. Complaints were made, although it is not clear by whom, that the situation was not only inconvenient but violated transportation laws. This “tour-bus-

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<sup>1</sup> This reflects a standard interpretation repeated often in Dorogawa. Miyake, in *Ōmine Shugendō no kenkyū* 大峯修験道の研究 (Tokyo: Kōsei, 1988), 393, mentions it without citation. Suzuki Masataka 鈴木正孝, *Nyonin kinsei* 女人禁制 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2002), 38, cites Kizu Yuzuru 木津譲, *Nyonin kinsei: gendai kegare, kiyome kō* 女人禁制：現代汚れ、清め考 (Osaka: Kaihō Shuppansha, 1992), 68. Kizu cites an interview with former Ryūsenji parishioner representative Zenitani Osamu 銭谷修. I often encountered this type of hearsay loop during my research.

guide problem,” as it is called, presented an additional labor concern, one that local residents today claim was the most pressing concern of the time.<sup>2</sup>

The Kintetsu Corporation, railway giant of Japan’s Kansai area, encouraged a renegotiated boundary line for different reasons. As reported in the October 31 edition of the *Yamato Times* 大和タイムス, Kintetsu proposed the development of a new hiking course along the ridgeline connecting Mount Shisuniwa (*Shisuniwayama* 四寸岩山, 1235m) and Ōtenjō Peak (*Ōtenjōdake* 大天井ヶ岳, 1439m), a stretch of trail roughly two hours by foot between Sanjōgatake and Yoshino.<sup>3</sup> Looking forward to the 1970 Osaka World Expo, Kintetsu requested an expansion of the area that women could enter in order to make the region accessible to all. Kintetsu railcars in the greater Nara and Osaka areas were plastered with advertisements for Yoshino and Ōmine, but there was still no easy method of reaching Dorogawa and the Sanjōgatake trailhead.

Institutional representatives from the mountaintop temple at Sanjōgatake, Ōminesanji (specifically, the head priests of its five managing bodies; see chapter four), community leaders from Yoshino and Dorogawa, lay climbing guild representatives, and the operations manager of Kintetsu Railway met to discuss these issues at the Buddhist temple Chikurin’in 竹林院 on October 29.<sup>4</sup> On the agenda was a proposal to transfer the boundary on the Yoshino side twelve kilometers closer to Sanjōgatake, from Aone Peak (*Aonegamine* 青根が峯) to Goban Pass (*Gobanseki* 五

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<sup>2</sup> Kyōtani, interview. It is also noted both by Suzuki, *Nyonin kinsei*, 39–40; and Kizu *Nyonin kinsei*, 67–68.

<sup>3</sup> “Yuragu nyonin kinsei no hōtō, Ōminesan-kei kinsei kuiki shukushō o jimoto shinto ga kōsha ni yōbō” 揺らぐ女人禁制の法灯、大峰山系禁制区域縮小を地元信徒が講社に要望, *Yamato Taimusu* 大和タイムス, October 31, 1969.

<sup>4</sup> Chikurin’in, reputedly built by Japan’s cultural hero Shōtoku Taishi 聖徳太子 (574–622), has a long history of hosting famous ascetics and emperors.

番関), and two kilometers on the Dorogawa side from the Mother's Hall to the Bridge of Great Purity (*Seijō ōhashi* 清浄大橋) (Figure 1.5).

The Ōminesanji group approved the proposal; some even voted to lift the ban on women entirely. Representatives of the powerful guilds vehemently opposed any changes.<sup>5</sup> Yoshino and Dorogawa locals expressed mixed feelings. On the one hand, they were eager to reap the economic benefits of increased tourist revenue and alleviate labor frustrations. Twenty years after the war, remote communities were grappling with the detrimental effects of depopulation. At the same time, they held steadfast to their belief in Ōminesan as a religious training site founded by En no Gyōja 1300 years prior and predicated by the notion that women not pass beyond the Mother's Hall.

The meeting adjourned with no clear resolution. Three months later, in the dead of winter, all parties agreed to the proposed reductions to the scope of the boundary at a meeting of temple authorities in Osaka. In early February 1970, Okada Yūshū 岡田宥秀, who was serving as both head priest of Ryūsenji 龍泉寺 and head regent (*shikkōchō* 執行長) of Sanbō'in 三宝院 (an important sub-temple of Daigoji 醍醐寺 in Kyoto), conducted a service at the Mother's Hall for an audience of two hundred people. Along with a woman representing Ōminesan's female devotees and local community leaders from Tenkawa Village, Okada cut a red-and-white tape, symbolically cutting through the barrier that had long kept women out. Guides from Ōminesan's eight major lay climbing guilds (*hachiyakkō* 八役講) then led a procession of fifty female devotees two kilometers deeper into the mountains along a

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<sup>5</sup> Okada Kishū 岡田喜秋, "Nyonin kinsei yuragu Ōminesan" 女人禁制ゆらぐ大峯山, *Tabi* 旅 44, no. 5 (May 1970): 125. Okada notes that the guilds supported plans for improved access.

cedar-lined path as *yamabushi* blew conch shells (*horagai* 法螺貝), traditional Shugendō instruments. After crossing the Bridge of Great Purity and reaching the new boundary line, a large fire rite (*goma* 護摩) was held celebrating the trailhead.<sup>6</sup>

The 1970 decision resulted in a topographical and conceptual re-mapping of Ōminesan's bounded realm that essentially stripped the 1300-year-old boundary line at the Mother's Hall of its symbolic significance in order to accommodate twentieth-century concerns. An understanding of the mountain's rich landscapes and characteristic complexities is necessary to grasp these issues. This chapter therefore offers a panoramic view of the mountain, providing needed background for investigations into specific contours of the mountain's lived religious traditions that follow. I first tackle the issue of names, an unexpectedly complicated endeavor. I then lead the reader on a metaphorical journey to the boundary lines, introducing major sites and figures, both as they are imagined and as they are encountered today.

### Many Peaks, Many Names

Alighting from the Kintetsu Yoshino Line at Shimoichiguchi 下市口 for the first time, I looked around and asked myself, "Where is Ōminesan?" I boarded a bus bound for Dorogawa, empty until a young Buddhist monk entered just as the engine was turned on. We slowly passed through long tunnels and over layers of dense peaks. With each turn, the complexity of the landscape unfolded further. Until this point I had assumed, as do many visitors, that Ōminesan was a single mountain peak, famous more for its distinctive religious culture than its topography.

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<sup>6</sup> "Josei shinto ga tōri hajime—horagai hibikase kekkai kaitei wo iwau" 女性信徒が通りぞめ一ホラ貝響かせ結界改定を祝う, *Yamato taimusu* 大和タイムス, May 3, 1970.

Unlike Fujisan, immediately discernible for its grand conical shape, Ōminesan is a surreptitiously vast assemblage of peaks that are connected by a web of pilgrimage routes.<sup>7</sup> The single name Ōminesan captures a dizzying array of places, and these places—like the practices performed at them—have changed considerably over time.<sup>8</sup> Strictly speaking, there is no single “Ōminesan.” In broad application, Ōminesan signifies the Ōminesan range (*Ōminesan myaku* 大峯山脈), a fifty-kilometer stretch of 1500- to 1900-meter tall peaks in Yoshino District (Yoshinogun 吉野郡) in Nara Prefecture. Hakkyō Peak (*Hakkyōgatake* 八経ヶ岳, 1914.6m) rises the tallest, followed by Mount Mi (*Misen* 弥山, 1895m), Daifugen Peak (*Daifugendake* 大普賢岳, 1780m), Inamura Peak (*Inamuragatake* 稲村ヶ岳, 1725.9m), Sanjōgatake (1719.3m), Gyōjagaeri Peak (*Gyōjagaeridake* 行者還岳, 1546m), Chōsen Peak (*Chōsendake* 頂仙岳), Akagami Peak (*Akagamigadake* 明上ヶ岳), Shaka Peak (*Shakagatake* 釈迦ヶ岳), and others (Figure 1.6).<sup>9</sup> And yet

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<sup>7</sup> This holds true for many mountain ranges in Japan, including Mount Hiko (*Hikosan* 英彦山) in Kyushu and Mount Togakushi (*Togakushisan* 戸隠山) in Nagano 長野 Prefecture, for which the names can also designate single peaks within the range.

<sup>8</sup> This endeavor would not be possible without the generous assistance I received from Mr. Totonobu Asamura 浅村朋伸 of the Onjōji Buddhist Statue Repair Institute (*Onjōji Bukkyō sonzō shūfuku'in* 園城寺仏教尊像修復院). One of Asamura’s specialties is to retrace ancient pilgrimage routes in the Ōmine range by studying old routes and relevant sites. Like mountain names, temple affiliations are similarly complicated. Onjōji (also known as Miidera 三井寺, in Shiga Prefecture near Lake Biwa), head temple of the Jimon 寺門 branch of the Tendai school of Buddhism, holds an affiliation with the imperial temple Shōgo’in 聖護院 in Kyoto, one of three main Shugendō temples connected to Ōminesan today (chapter four considers related institutional and administrative matters). Asamura kindly guided me through portions of the Ōmine Okugake Trail on two occasions and during these challenging climbs he was an unflinching and patient consultant on such matters as names.

<sup>9</sup> The entire range is included in the Yoshino–Kumano National Park (designated in 1936). Ōminesan’s National Park selection is treated in detail in chapter three.

Ōminesan, as we shall see, is also synonymous with Sanjōgatake, located in the central part of the range.

Adding to the confusion, both Ōminesan (a region and a route) and Sanjōgatake (a single peak) in today's Yoshino District appear in premodern sources as the “Gold-Peak Mountain” (*Kinpusen* 金峯山) or “Peak of Gold” (*Mikanenotake* 御金の嶽).<sup>10</sup> *Kinpusen* can also refer to the area between Yoshinoyama, a seven-square-kilometer area south from the Yoshino River (*Yoshinogawa* 吉野川) to Aonegamine (Figure 1.7), and Sanjōgatake.<sup>11</sup> Until the late nineteenth century, in the early decades of Japan's Meiji period 明治時代 (1868–1912), the temples and land of Sanjōgatake peak were managed and owned by *Kinpusenji* 金峯山寺 in Yoshino and were considered part of Yoshinoyama. Period documents, for example, refer to the peak as Mount Kinpu Mountaintop (*Kinpusen Sanjō* 金峯山山上).<sup>12</sup>

Today, Sanjōgatake is considered to be part of Ōminesan, and thus separate from Yoshino. This is a twentieth-century development. Since the Meiji period, the mountaintop temple off-limits to women has been known by at least five names, including the two mentioned above: Mountaintop Zaō Hall (*Sanjō Zaō dō* 山上蔵王堂), Inner Precinct of Kinpu Shrine (*Kinpu jinja oku no miya* 金峯神社奥ノ宮), Ōmine Mountaintop Main Hall (*Ōmine sanjō hondō* 大峯山上本堂), Mountaintop Main Hall (*Sanjō hondō* 山上本堂), and since 1942 Ōminesanji 大峯山寺. In 1868, amidst revolutionary changes in Japan's political and religious spheres, the

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<sup>10</sup> Readers are directed to Shudō Yoshiki 首藤善樹, *Kinpusenji* 金峯山寺 (Tokyo: Meiwa Insatsu Kabushikigaisha, 2004) in Japanese. In English, see Blair, *Real and Imagined*, for a superb study of *Kinpusen* in the Heian period.

<sup>11</sup> It is unclear when the name Sanjōgatake emerged as the official name of the peak.

<sup>12</sup> Shudō, *Kinpusenji*, 247.

mountaintop Buddhist temple, then called the Mountaintop Zaō Hall, was renamed the Inner Precinct of Kinpu Shrine, and its Buddhist icons and implements were removed (Meiji-period changes at the mountain are the subject of chapter two).

The routes connecting Ōminesan's peaks are also complex. The traditional nexus of religious pilgrimage in Japan consisted less of a trek to a single peak (such as today's popular practice of climbing to and from Sanjōgatake via Dorogawa) than a long journey endured across many peaks while performing religious austerities (*shugyō* 修行). "Ōmine Training" (*Ōmine shugyō* 大峯修行) came to mean walking from Sanjōgatake all the way south to Kumano, stopping along the way at ascetic practice sites called *nabiki* 靡 which were reputed to have En no Gyōja's traces. These sites and training itineraries differ according to time period and religious group.

A mountainous path called the Okugake Trail, an Edo-period creation, winds down the spine of the Ōminesan range (reference Figure 1.2).<sup>13</sup> The southern portion of the Okugake stretches eighty kilometers from Hongū Shrine 本宮大社 in Kumano to Ozasa 小笹 (an important base for the Tōzan 当山 school of Shugendō and closest water source to Sanjōgatake). At some point in time, the northern route from Yoshino to Zenki 前鬼, which passes through Sanjōgatake, met the southern Okugake route. This led to the entire north-south route being called Ōmine Okugake 大峯奥駈, although it was originally a collection of separate training routes.

For the Honzan 本山 tradition of Shugendō (Tendai affiliation), headquartered at Shōgo'in 聖護院 in Kyoto, Ōmine Training referred to the approximately two-

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<sup>13</sup> See Georgios Klonos's 2012 dissertation on Ōminesan Shugendō in the early modern period (seventeenth to nineteenth centuries) for a detailed treatment of the Okugake, in particular the northern part that passes through Sanjōgatake. "Shugendō in the Tokugawa Period: Mount Ōmine as Imaginary Space and Place of Practice" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Stanford University, 2012).

week mountainous pilgrimage from Kumano to Yoshino called “peaks in order” (*junbu* 順峯).<sup>14</sup> Conversely, the Tōzan 当山 tradition of Shugendō (Shingon affiliation), centered at Daigoji’s Sanbō’in in Kyoto, Ōmine Training denoted the opposite route from Yoshino to Kumano called “peaks in reverse” (*gyakubu* 逆峯). Eventually, the southern portion of the Okugake Trail fell into disuse entirely, reemerging only recently in practice.

In 2004, the “Ōmine Okugake Trail” was designated part of the “Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes of the Kii Mountain Range” (*Kii sanchi no reijō to sankeidō* 紀伊山地の霊場と参詣道) UNESCO World Heritage Site (see chapter three, section two). UNESCO literature describes it as a single and continuous trail extending all the way from Kumano in the south to Yoshino in the north. This is a recent concept, however, reflecting but one interpretation of an earlier 75-station course of ascetic practice sites (i.e., one course among several, with varying numbers of stations, on the same route). In reality, the term “Ōmine Okugake” refers to a collection of disjointed and originally unconnected routes, just as “female exclusion” has been erroneously regarded as an ancient and unchanging “traditional” layer of Japanese culture.

Finally, it bears noting that today’s expression “climbing Ōminesan” refers predominantly to the ten-kilometer round-trip journey from Dorogawa. Until the late nineteenth century, however, almost all religious pilgrims trekked from Yoshino to Sanjōgatake, fourteen kilometers distant (and thus nearly three times longer than the former). Dorogawa seems to have been relatively obscure before the modern period,

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<sup>14</sup> For more detail in English, see Swanson, “*Shugendō* and the Yoshino-Kumano Pilgrimage.” In Japanese, I suggest Miyake, *Ōmine Shugendō no kenkyū*; and Gorai Shigeru 五来重, *Yama no shūkyō—Shugendō* 山の宗教—修験道 (Tokyo: Dankōsha, 1970).

when it emerged as the main access point to Sanjōgatake, which it remains today.<sup>15</sup> At the same time, Dorogawa became the place where both male supporters and mountain practitioners made last minute preparations for the climb and later availed themselves of worldly pleasures at the many inns and teahouses where they could call for the services of women. This latter activity fell out of practice with anti-prostitution legislation in the 1950s, but the community readily acknowledges its vital role in the town's development.

Even careful readers may be bewildered at this point, and they would not be alone. The matter of names and geographical definitions has caused considerable confusion in the literature and on the ground. I offer two examples here. Helen Hardacre's 1983 article on cave rituals at Ōminesan refers to Sanjōgatake as the "main peak" and Mount Nanao (*Nanaosan* 七尾山), site of a new religion at the mountain unaffiliated with Ōmine Shugendō, as the "lower peak."<sup>16</sup> These designations hold no meaning, in either a historical or vernacular sense, at the mountain. Furthermore, a man in Dorogawa claiming to be a longtime visitor and devotee of the mountain, remarked, "I will climb Ōminesan tomorrow." When I inquired which part of Ōminesan he would climb, the man replied, "Ōminesan, the mountain off limits to women!" I responded, "My understanding is that only one peak, Sanjōgatake, is off limits to women." He looked utterly perplexed even as he acknowledged this fact. Ōminesan's peaks are known by many names and hold

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<sup>15</sup> On occasion, pilgrims descended to Dorogawa from Sanjōgatake to pay homage to a cult of dragon gods at Ryūsenji and the goddess of water at the Tenkawa Benzaiten Shrine (*Tenkawa Benzaiten sha* 天川弁財天社). Others stayed on the Okugake Trail as far as Ozasa, a water source and important historical training site for the Tōzan lineage of Shugendō, before doubling back to Yoshino.

<sup>16</sup> Helen Hardacre, "The Cave and the Womb World," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 10, no. 2/3, (1983): 152.

mutable meanings. Like the physical landscape itself, Ōminesan's names can easily contradict upon scrutiny, but there is a general sense of understanding about them—albeit one that upholds certain invented traditions.<sup>17</sup>

#### “The Road Going to the Mountain”

After crossing the vermillion-colored Bridge of Great Purity, the Sanjōgatake trailhead appears down a path lined by rows of stone statues and monuments

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<sup>17</sup> The trails may be centuries old, but they are nonetheless difficult to follow. The challenge extends beyond the conceptual realm and into the physical—hikers regularly lose their way in the dense forests, keeping Dorogawa's search and rescue team busy year round. In March 2014, for example, an American, Michael Blodgett, disappeared on his third climb to Sanjōgatake and was missing for seven days until he found his way out. Blodgett's first-person account exemplifies the complexities of Ōminesan, not simply because a man went missing but because of how he experienced and imagined the mountain. Blodgett describes visiting Dorogawa and meeting “the head priest” of Ōminesanji, “Shinchoku Sensei,” who regaled him with stories of ascetic journeys in the mountain. Shinchoku 神直, legal name Yamaguchi Mikio 山口神酒夫, is not the head priest of Ōminesanji, nor is he officially affiliated with Ōminesanji or Shugendō; Yamaguchi is the founder of a new religion in Dorogawa called Ja no kura Nanaosan 蛇の蔵七尾山. Blodgett states that he returned during Dorogawa's annual Ascetic's Festival in August to pray for the healthy birth of his daughter. He again met with Shinchoku before climbing Sanjōgatake and purchasing a protective amulet for safe childbirth. On Blodgett's third visit to the mountain, also for the purpose of praying for safe childbirth, he climbed Sanjōgatake (note that March is the off-season and the mountaintop temple is closed at this time) after a fresh snowfall. Blodgett successfully reached the top of Sanjōgatake but slipped as he descended, falling seventy meters from the trail into a freezing river. Blodgett located an abandoned hunter's lodge and holed up to await rescue. He heard helicopters and attempted to make his presence known, but was unsuccessful. On the seventh day, he crawled slowly and painfully back up to the trail and down to Dorogawa. In his own words, “I stumbled back into town and stopped at the first house I found and rang the intercom. When they answered, I responded, ‘It's Michael. Please help. Please help. Please help.’ The door opened, and I was helped inside. I fell to my knees and began to weep. I was alive and safe inside Shinchoku Sensei's house.” Whether intending to do so or not, Blodgett frames his journey in terms of Shinchoku's own ascetic pursuits, and even describes this as “destiny.” What appears on the surface as a clear-cut case of mountain rescue is in fact a layered web of assumptions and constructions, at the same time touching on several issues concerning cultural imaginings at the mountain; this is the subject of chapter three. The new religion at Nanaosan is discussed in detail in chapter six. Michael Blodgett, “Misstep in the Mountains,” *Outdoor Japan* 54 (March 2015): [http://www.outdoorjapan.com/magazine/story\\_details/337](http://www.outdoorjapan.com/magazine/story_details/337) (accessed July 18, 2015).

commemorating (men's) religious climbs to the sacred peak (Figure 1.7). Here stands a wooden gate, more than three meters tall, outfitted with metal tips and a banner stating "Women's restricted zone gate" (*Nyonin kekkai mon* 女人結界門). A stone pillar (height 327cm, circumference 70cm) standing before the gate restates the message with the words "From here [onward] is the women's restricted zone" (*kore yori nyonin kekkai* 從是女人結界) carved in stone on its face (Figure 1.8). A third line of defense, foregrounding both gate and stone, is a signboard the size of a tatami mat (roughly one meter tall and half a meter wide) stating in both Japanese and English (Figure 1.9):

"No Woman Admitted" Regulation of this holly [sic] mountain Omimesan prohibits any woman from climbing farther through this gate according to the religious tradition. Omimesanji Temple

*Kono reizan Ōmimesan no okite wa shūkyō-teki dentō ni shitagatte josei ga kono mon yori mukō e noboru koto o kinshi shimasu. Ōmimesanji*

この霊山大峯山の掟は宗教的傳統に従って女性がこの門より向こうへ登ることを禁止します。大峯山寺

A small vermilion gate also stands here, erected in 1975 as a "veneration from afar" platform (*yōhaijo* 遥拝所) (Figure 1.10).<sup>18</sup> On a clear day, the platform gate frames Sanjōgatake's craggy features, and male and female pilgrims can perform rituals here in homage to the distant peak. Men venerate Sanjōgatake from afar here in

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<sup>18</sup> As an aside, although this "veneration from afar" site is ostensibly intended for women, I have encountered more men here than women. A similar structure looks out to Okinoshima 沖ノ島 in Kyushu, an island prohibited to women (although it is not regularly open to men either) and currently under consideration to become a UNESCO World Heritage Site. I plan to conduct research on this site in the future.

preparation for a journey up; women venerate from afar here as the culmination of their journey.<sup>19</sup>

This chapter is less concerned with summiting Sanjōgatake than understanding how and where the peak is set apart as a bounded realm. Therefore, our next move is back down the mountain to retrace the journey to this boundary line. The careful descriptions of major sites offer many details of what the traveler encounters, but each step is important not only for introducing the setting but also for highlighting the unstable definition of boundary lines. Furthermore, in terms of the literature for Ōminesan overall, this survey does not exist in English or in Japanese.

Dorogawa and the western trailhead to Sanjōgatake are still difficult to reach today (over an hour by bus or car from the nearest train station), let alone in times past when they could be accessed only by foot or via a narrow, single-lane road that could barely accommodate ox carts and carriages (Figure 1.11). The road to Dorogawa today follows National Highway 309 from Shimoichi 下市, at the confluence of the Yoshino and Akino 秋野 rivers. Shimoichi long served as a support site for Ōminesan, providing critical services to travelers entering or leaving the mountains (thus it is often referred to as Shimoichiguchi, or “mouth of Shimoichi”).<sup>20</sup> Figure 1.13 illustrates the intricate system of roads, historical and contemporary, that lead toward Sanjōgatake from the Nara basin. The road that begins from Shimoichi and travels south via Kurotaki 黒滝 was called the Niu-Tenkawa Highway (*Niu Tenkawa kaidō* 丹生天川街道), or simply, “The Road Going to the Mountain” (*Sanjō mairi*

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<sup>19</sup> For a summary of the ascent to Sanjōgatake from the Bridge of Great Purity, readers may consult Swanson, “*Shugendō* and the Yoshino-Kumano Pilgrimage,” esp. 70–73.

<sup>20</sup> There they could stock up on local fish such as sweetfish (*ayu* 鮎, also known in the region as *ai* あい) purchase various woodcrafts and tools, and also send cargo downstream to Osaka.

*michi* 山上参り道). In the Edo period, the Kurotaki–Dorogawa Highway (*Kurotaki Dorogawa kaidō* 黒滝洞川街道), its predecessor, was a narrow and steep path that crossed over Hirohashi Ridge 広橋峠.

In 1897, the road was improved to provide safer access for travelers, carts, and carriages. Travelers slowly wound through Kurotaki Village 黒滝村, Kominami Ridge 小南峠, and the Kominami Tunnel 小南トンネル upon its completion in 1901. After being designated a Prefectural Road in 1922, the Niu-Tenkawa Highway underwent major improvements, being redirected at some points and widened at others. Both roads received much-needed repairs in 1965, and a new route was constructed on the western side of Hirohashi Ridge (present-day National Highway 309); sources are unclear on whether this western route cut an entirely new path or expanded an earlier one. Before reaching Tenkawa Village 天川村, the newly constructed and wider 1922-constructed road merged at two points with the 1897 and 1922 roads. This was unavoidable due to the difficult terrain. In 1988 and 2001, two tunnels were constructed to decrease the difficulties.<sup>21</sup>

Ōminesan’s main vein and branches converge in Tenkawa Village, which today spans roughly twenty kilometers east to west and thirteen north to south.<sup>22</sup> On April 1, 1889, a total of twenty-three small villages (including Dorogawa) were merged and

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<sup>21</sup> *Yamato Shimoichi shi* 大和下市史 (1873), *Kurotaki mura shi* 黒瀧村史 (1957), cited in “Kokudō 309 gōsen kyūdō” 国道 309 号線旧道 (January 29, 2009): <http://road.uroneko.com/onr309-352.htm> (accessed October 20, 2015).

<sup>22</sup> Detailed information on Dorogawa and Tenkawa Village can be found in Iwai Hiromi 岩井宏實, *Chiiki shakai no minzokugakuteki kenkyū* 地域社会の民俗学的研究 (Tokyo: Hōsei University Press, 2014), esp. 379–391; Iwano Kazuhiko 岩野和彦, *Tenkawa mura ryūiki: tani* 天川村流域、谿 (Yoshino: Oku Yoshino kenkyūkai, 1992); Miyake, *Ōmine Shugendō no kenkyū*. I referenced these, local guidebooks, and other materials from the Dorogawa reference library for this brief summary.

renamed Tenkawa Village.<sup>23</sup> Deep valleys and steep cliffs form most of Tenkawa's terrain, and its hamlets dot small sections of arable land. Dorogawa lies at the western foot of Sanjōgatake at an elevation of about 800 meters. Today, the town spans fifty-one square kilometers, and had a population of 822 in 2002 (380 men and 442 women, most aged seventy or above).<sup>24</sup> Inns line the main thoroughfare, and the temple of Ryūsenji nestles against a hillside to the north. Clusters of houses hug the northeast side of the river (Figure 1.13).

Legend and lore accumulate like sediment in the waters of the River of Heaven as they cascade down from Ōminesan's peaks in mysterious green-blue hues.<sup>25</sup> At Ryūsenji, these "Rumbling Waters" (*Gorogoro mizu* ゴロゴロ水), as they are called

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<sup>23</sup> Sixteen villages in the upper reaches collectively called Tenkawa (Dorogawa 洞川, Kitazumi 北角, Nakagoshi 中越, Kawaai 川合, Okigane 沖金, Kobara 小原, Nakatani 中谷, Kitakobara 北小原, Sawabara 沢原, Sawatani 沢谷, Goshiki 五色, Minamihiura 南日裏, Tsubonouchi 坪ノ内, Tsuzurao 九尾, Tochio 栃尾, Wada 和田) and seven villages in the lower reaches of Sanmyōgō 三名郷 (Komori 籠山, Iosumi 庵住, Yamanishi 山西, Hirose 広瀬, Takio 滝尾, Shiono 塩野, Shiotani 塩谷).

<sup>24</sup> Tenkawa Village Office 天川村役場, "Jinkō" 人口 (December, 2002). The population in 1987 was 1,046 (482 men and 564 women), as noted in Itō Sanae 伊東早苗, "Ōminesan no nyonin kinsei—Dorogawa onsen kawa nobori guchi wo chūshin ni" 大峯山の女人禁制—洞川側登り口を中心に (M.A. Thesis, Keio University, 1988), 24.

<sup>25</sup> Another headspring begins at Misen and cascades over Immortal's Rock (*Sennin gura* 仙人嶺). The two streams meet at Mitarai Gorge (*Mitarai keikoku* みたらい溪谷), and from there the River of Heaven flows to Tenkawa's Benzaiten Shrine 天川弁財天社. The shrine, one of Japan's three largest dedicated to the female god Benzaiten, appears in records as early as the seventh century. Benzaiten is revered from India to Japan as the goddess of all that flows, especially water, arts, and eloquence. See Catherine Ludvik, "From Sarasvati to Benzaiten" (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Toronto, 2001). For more on the relationship between Tenkawa, Misen, and Benzaiten, see Iwano, *Tenkawa mura ryūiki*, 76–93. According to one well-known legend, preserved in the *Tamon'in nikki* 多聞院日記 (compiled between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries), En no Gyōja first practiced religious austerities at Misen under the divine guidance of Benzaiten. Finding her too gentle, he began dedicating practice to Jizō *bodhisattva* 地藏菩薩 at Kawakami 川上. Seeking further challenge still, he raised up Zāo Gongen from the top of Sanjōgatake.

today, feed the temple's "Dragon's Mouth" (*Ryū no kuchi* 龍の口).<sup>26</sup> After discovering the spring, En no Gyōja reputedly built a small structure nearby to worship the Eight Great Dragon Kings (*Hachi dai ryūō* 八大龍王), who are honored as the tutelary gods of Ōminesan (and are the provenance of the temple's name, "dragon" and "spring"). The dragon spring site that would later become Ryūsenji fell into disuse for some two hundred years after En no Gyōja's time until it was revived by Shōbō Rigen Daishi 聖宝理源大師 (832–909), a Buddhist cleric revered as the founder of Daigoji in Kyoto. Kūkai 空海 (774–835), founder of Japan's Shingon 真言 tradition of esoteric Buddhism, is reputed to have visited from Kōyasan as well. Today, the spring feeds a large pond in the center of the Ryūsenji temple grounds, and religious practitioners use it for water ablution rites (Figure 1.14).

According to another often-repeated Dorogawa legend, Ryūsenji was established when a local man traveled the realm and brought a woman home with him to the deep mountains.<sup>27</sup> They married and she bore him a son. The wife instructed the husband to announce his return from work in the forest each day. He did so regularly, except once, when he entered the house silently. To his shock, his wife appeared as a coiled white serpent. The next day, the woman's shape had shifted back into human form. Her true nature exposed, the serpent-woman entrusted the child to the father and disappeared into a nearby pond. Before leaving, however, she gave one of her eyeballs to her son. The child grew up ashamed of the eyeball, hiding it, until one day he lost it. The serpent-mother appeared and offered the boy her other eye. Having lost

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<sup>26</sup> The waters are designated by the Ministry of the Environment (*Kankyōshō* 環境省) as one of the One Hundred Famous Waters of Japan, by the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport (*Kokudo Kōtsūshō* 国土交通省) as one of "34 Choice Hometown Waters," and by Nara Prefecture as "Yamato's Water."

<sup>27</sup> Iwano also mentions this legend. *Tenkawa mura ryūiki*, 9–10.

both her eyes, she became blind. Not knowing day from night, she requested that three bells be sounded in the morning and six in the evening. The man built a temple by the side of the pond, from where he diligently rang the bell. This temple became Ryūsenji, extant in the same presumed spot, where bells continue to ring twice daily. The story of the temple's origin, like the legends of En no Gyōja and his mother I introduce below, highlights the close and complicated relationship between a mother and her son that figures prominently into the standard narrative ascribed to female exclusion at the mountain.

The significance of female exclusion is discernable not only in Ryūsenji lore but also on the ground—the temple's gated complex was off-limits to women until 1960 (I discuss this in further detail in chapter six). A stone pillar dating to 1780 stands at Ryūsenji today, reading “From here [onward] women not permitted to enter” (*kore yori nyonin iru koto o yurusazu* 從是不許入女人; height 157cm, circumference 44cm) (Figure 1.15).<sup>28</sup> Much of Ryūsenji's early history is shrouded in mystery, but it seems to have functioned as a small family temple (*dannadera* 檀那寺) until its influence expanded in the Edo period, when lay mountain climbing and worship guilds emerged, in particular the Dragon King Guild (*Ryūō kō* 龍王講). Until 1880 Ryūsenji operated as a Shingon temple, headquartered at Sanbō'in. Today, the main hall enshrines Miroku *bodhisattva* 弥勒菩薩 (Skt. Maitreya), Shōbō Rigen Daishi, En no Gyōja, Kōbō daishi 弘法大師 (Kūkai's posthumous name), and Fudō Myōō 不動明王 (Skt. Acalanātha). Also on the grounds is a hall dedicated to the Eight Great Dragon Kings, another that enshrines guild leaders and local parishioners' ancestors

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<sup>28</sup> Ryūsenji's inner precincts were at one time considered an inner training site of Ōminesan (*Ōminesan nai dōjō* 大峯山内道場) and therefore part of Ōminesanji, but this changed in 1960 at the request of climbing guilds when the temple grounds were opened to women. I discuss this further in chapter six.

(*jinsei den* 神聖殿), a fire ritual area (*saitō goma dōjō* 柴燈護摩道場), and two water ablution sites (*mizu gyōba* 水行場).

Heading eastward upstream from Dorogawa on a narrow mountain road towards Sanjōgatake, the headquarters of Shugen setsuritsu konpon dōjo 修験節律根本道場 (aka Nanaosan Ja no Kura 七尾山蛇の蔵), Ōminesan’s flourishing new religion that fully embraces women’s participation, comes into view (Figure 1.16). At a teahouse called Yomegachaya 嫁ヶ茶屋 (literally, “Bride’s Teahouse”), managed for generations by the Yamaguchi family, another trail intersects and leads across the river to the Praying Mantis Cave (*Tōrō no iwaya* 螳螂の岩屋) and Bat Cave (*Kōmori no iwaya* 蝙蝠の岩屋) (Figures 1.17–1.19). In the legend of En no Gyōja’s mother, it is from Praying Mantis Cave that the big snake emerges to block Shiratōme from passing. The cave is also known locally, especially among devotees of Nanaosan Ja no kura (literally, “Big Snake Lair of Nanaosan”), as the site where Shōbō subdued a male-female pair of giant snakes.<sup>29</sup> Although formerly an important site for ascetic practice (*gyōba* 行場) off-limits to women until 1960, the Praying Mantis Cave fell into obscurity after improved roads allowed bus access closer to the mountain. The adjacent Bat Cave, believed to be En no Gyōja’s former living quarters, has also largely dropped from public sight. Every point along the road to Sanjōgatake so far demonstrates how deeply the history of gender and sacred space is embedded at

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<sup>29</sup> Many scholars, such as Ryuichi Abé and Saeki Arikiyo 佐伯有清, consider many details of Shōbō’s life to be historical, such as his founding of Daigoji in Kyoto (874) and Tōnan’in at Tōdaiji, Nara (875). See Ryuichi Abé, *The Weaving of Mantra: Kūkai and the Construction of Esoteric Buddhist Discourse* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1999); and Saeki Arikiyo 佐伯有清, *Shōbō 聖宝* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1991). Shōbō’s place within Ōminesan’s religious landscape, however, entertains more legendary dimensions. Shōbō is said to have visited Dorogawa, where local people feared the snakes and would not dare come near the Praying Mantis Cave or further up the mountain. Shōbō entered the cave, chanting sutras, and exterminated the male snake. The female one fled to Nanaosan.

Ōminesan, whether it merely reinforces a well-established history of female exclusion, embellishes it, circumvents it, or serves as a reminder for lost histories through absence in the case of the Praying Mantis and Bat Caves.

Past Yomegachaya and En no Gyōja's forgotten caves, but before reaching the trailhead to Sanjōgatake, today's traveler meets a trail to Inamuragatake, a peak advertised as "Women's Ōmine" (*Nyonin Ōmine* 女人大峯), and the Mother's Hall which marked the boundary line for women until 1970. About five hundred meters beyond Yomegachaya on the main mountain road, one first passes a popular water-filling station, where visitors load up on the area's famous spring water. Directly across is a landing for a motorized ropeway to the Goyomatsu limestone cave (*Goyomatsu shōnyūdō* 五代松鍾乳洞) (Figure 1.20). The cave is named after Dorogawa resident Akai Goyomatsu 赤井五代松, who discovered the cavern, and his family still operates the landing and offers guided tours.

In 1932, Akai discovered a spring on the west slope of Inamuragatake. Over the next several years, Akai used the profits he made from selling spring water to repair area roads and trim trees in order to make a route to Inamuragatake. Akai built a small rest lodge (*koya* 小屋) called Mountaintop Crossing (*Sanjō tsuji* 山上辻) at a flat outcropping along a ridge top about two-thirds of the way to the summit. A trail to Sanjōgatake connects here, and about thirty minutes' walk closer, at the Lotus Crossing (*Renge tsuji* レンゲ辻), a wooden gate and a signpost prohibiting women's further progress stands (Figure 1.21). The Akai family also operates the lodge at Mountain Top Crossing, where they serve noodles and other refreshments to visitors. Further up the ridgeline from the lodge toward the summit of Inamuragatake, the trail branches and climbers can take a side path of roughly fifty meters to Mount Dainichi (*Dainichisan* 大目山), a small conical peak on the western edge of Inamuragatake

whose shape resembles bundled rice plants (Figure 1.22). Inamuragatake and Dainichisan have become well-known climbs for women since the mid-twentieth century, a topic I discuss in chapter six.

The trailhead to Inamuragatake lies just past the landing for Goyomatsu's cave, adjacent to a rather inconspicuous worship hall that holds great meaning to the mountain's tradition of female exclusion: the Mother's Hall (Figure 1.4). This small hall enshrines En no Gyōja's mother Shiratōme and the ascetic himself, accompanied by Kanzeon *bodhisattva* 觀世音菩薩 (Skt. Avalokiteśvara), Tori *tengu* 鳥天狗, Daishō Fudō Myōō 大聖不動明王, Shōbō Rigen Daishi, Kōbō Daishi, and Jizō *bodhisattva* 地藏菩薩 (Skt. Kṣitigarbha). For three generations the Taniguchi family has managed the Mother's Hall, and today father and son offer coffee, snacks, and lively conversation to visitors. In particular, the hall has become a haven for young couples who come to pray for safe childbirth and purchase various protective amulets and charms. According to the current literature from the Mother's Hall, "The incense smoke from women who came to pray for childbirth never dies out." In front of the hall a stone rises with the inscription "From here [onward] is the women's restricted zone" (*kore yori nyonin kekkai* 從是女人結界; 2.74m tall, 61cm circumference) (Figures 1.23, 1.24).

The reader will recall that until 1970 women were forbidden from passing beyond the Mother's Hall. Today, women can freely pass, at the same time the Taniguchi's will regale the visitor with the following story, also detailed in a pamphlet they provide.

Once upon a time, Ōminesan was called Kinpusen, "Peak of Gold," throughout the land. There was a pair walking the road to Ōminesan, where warm sunshine of spring shone on the fields and mountains. One

was Shiratōme, the mother of En no Ozuno [En no Gyōja], who had travelled all the way from Katsuragi Village, concerned about her son cloistered in the mountains as he diligently engaged day and night in ascetic practices, and the other was the “strange child” (*myōdō* 妙童) Goki, a disciple of En no Gyōja who resided in Dorogawa Village and attended to Ozuno’s needs.

The pair reached a valley that lay a short distance ahead up from the village. Casually glancing around as they attempted to cross the valley, they saw a big snake coiled up on the bank. First, Goki tried to cross the valley. The big snake suddenly opened its mouth and glared at Goki, blocking his way. Goki instinctively retreated in surprise. Next, [En no Gyōja’s] mother tried to cross, and once again the big snake blocked the path. After she stepped back, the big snake returned to its original coiled position as if nothing had happened. After some time had passed, when the two tried to cross the valley the big snake stretched its long body all the way out, preventing the pair from passing. This happened three or four more times. Perplexed and astounded, the mother and Goki gave up trying to cross the valley and turned back to Dorogawa, intending to try climbing the mountain another day.

...[middle part omitted]

The large snake that forbade [En no Gyōja’s] mother and Goki from crossing the valley and ascending the mountain that day is believed to have been an incarnation of the Eight Great Dragon Kings.

Mother made a hermitage on the side of the valley. Goki worked hard to look after the Mother and the village, and both wait for the Ascetic

to descend the mountain. Mother recited Buddhist teachings to the villagers and also helped women in the village during childbirth.

Henceforth this valley was deemed the boundary line from which women could proceed no further [*nyonin kinsei no kekkai* 女人禁制の結界], and this valley called “Big Snake Valley” [Jagatani 蛇ヶ谷]. Later, En no Gyōja’s mother was enshrined as Hahako and a hall was built on the site of her hermitage, becoming the Hahakodō.<sup>30</sup>

In another version of the story, of late-medieval-period provenance according to Miyake, En no Gyōja’s mother approached from Yoshino in the north.<sup>31</sup> She prostrated herself in front of the Zaō Hall 蔵王堂 of Anzenji 安禅寺, crossing over a

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<sup>30</sup>昔、大峯山は国中の人々から金峯山「かねのみねたけ」と呼ばれていました。春の暖かい陽射しが野山に輝いている大峯山へ登る道を歩く二人連れがありました。大峯の山に籠り、日夜修行に励む役（えん）の小角（おづの）「行者」の身を案じて、葛城の里からはるばる尋ねてきた小角の母「白専女」（しらとうめ）と、役の行者の仏弟子となって洞川の里に住み、小角の世話をしている後鬼「妙童」でした。二人は里から半里ほど上ったところにある谷に差しかかりました。谷を渡ろうとしてふと辺りを見ると、一匹の大蛇が岸にトグロを巻いていました。まず後鬼が谷を渡ろうとすると突然、大蛇は大きな口をあけて後鬼を睨んで行手を遮りました。驚いた後鬼は思わず後退りしました。今度は母公が渡ろうとしますと又同じように大蛇が行手をさえぎり、母公が後に下がりますと大蛇は元の場所でトグロを巻いて何事もなかったかのようにしています。しばらくして二人で谷を渡ろうとしますと、大蛇は長い蛇身を一杯に伸ばして、二人の行く手をふさいでしまいます。こんなことを三度も四度も繰返しました。困り果てた母公と後鬼は不思議なことと思いつつもとうとう谷を渡ることをあきらめて、山登りは後日にしようとして洞川の里に引きかえしました。中略。母公と後鬼は今日、谷を渡らせず山に上らせなかった大蛇はきっと「八大龍王」の化身であったのだなと思いました。母公はこの谷の岸に庵をつくり、後鬼は一生懸命に母公に仕え身の回りの世話をし、行者の下山するのを待ちました。母公は里の人々に仏の教えを説きながら里の女の出産を助けたりしました。以来この谷を蛇ヶ谷と呼び女人禁制の結界と定められました。その後この庵跡に堂宇を建立し母公堂（ははこどう）と呼んで母公を祀ってきました。“Hahakodō 母公堂, pamphlet, Dorogawa. My own translation.

<sup>31</sup> Miyake, *Ōmine Shugendō no kenkyū*, 396.

boundary line (we are not told exactly where) and continuing toward Sanjōgatake.<sup>32</sup> She reached as far as a point called Nakakoba 中小場. There, she was stopped in her tracks at a place between Yoshinoyama and Kinpusen called Ashizuri 足摺 (literally, “feet stamping”). En no Gyōja’s mother also appears in the *Shozan engi* 諸山縁起 (*Origins of Various Mountains*, ca. 1185), a collection of tales related to mountains significant to Shugendō that includes records of an oral tradition of Ōminesan guides. Here, she lives in a cave resembling a five pronged *vajra* (*gokosho* 五鉈杵) at Hōtō Peak 宝塔ヶ岳 (*Hōtōgatake*, present-day summit of Dainichi Peak (*Dainichigatake* 大日ヶ岳)).

In contrast to the standard motif of a mother seeking her son, this version depicts En no Gyōja travelling three times a day from Jinzen 神仙 to the cave to worship his mother at a stone altar near the entrance. He invited Hokuto daishi 北斗大師, the “Third Immortal” (*daisan no sennin* 第三の仙人) from Tang China, and together they made offerings of a thousand small stupas for her. The text then relates En no Gyōja’s fall from grace and banishment to Izu and also elaborates upon his return to Ōminesan. Finally, En no Gyōja entrusts his future affairs to his disciples Zenki 前鬼 and Goki 後鬼 (literally, “anterior demon” and “posterior demon”), shaves his beard, places his mother in an alms bowl, and flies with her to China (Figure 1.25).<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Anzenji was a small temple on the Yoshino side also known as the Inner Precinct of Yoshino (*Yoshino no oku no in* 吉野の奥の院). It was destroyed during the persecution of Buddhism in the early Meiji period, although some of its icons were saved and moved to Kinpusenji.

<sup>33</sup> *Shozan engi* 諸山縁起, *Jisha engi* 寺社縁起 (*NST*), 342–43. Jinzen 神仙 denotes present day Jinzen 深仙 (station 38).

Key elements of the narrative remain consistent (e.g., a worried mother searches for her son and is unable to enter the mountains beyond a certain point), but certain aspects appear to be translocal—similar female figures appear in the legendary histories of other famous sacred sites such as Hieizan and Kōyasan. Several scholars connect stories of En no Gyōja’s mother with an ambiguous nun/shamaness figure known as Toran 都藍 (or some variation thereof).<sup>34</sup> One version of the Toran story, set at Ōminesan, appears in the fourteenth-century historical book *Genkō shakushō* 元亨釈書 (*History [of Buddhism] of the Genkō Era*, 1377):

The nun Toran was a woman of the province of Yamato. She practiced Buddhist asceticism in detail, and at the same time she studied the Taoist arts of immortality. She dwelled at the foot of Mount Yoshino. As tradition has it, the earth of Kinbusen [sic] is pure gold, and it is protected by Kongō Zaō Bosatsu, who will not permit women to cross its boundaries. Toran said, “Woman though I am, I observe the commandments of purity and have experienced supernatural effects. How could I be classed with ordinary women?” and so she climbed up Kinbusen. Suddenly there was thunder and lightning and it grew dark; in her confusion she no longer recognized the path. She threw away the staff she had been holding, and it took root of itself, growing at length into a great tree. Toran also

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<sup>34</sup> In Japanese, see Abe Yasurō 阿部泰郎, “Nyonin kinsei to suisan” 女人禁制と推参 in “*Miko to joshin*,” *Shirīzu josei to Bukkyō* 「巫女と女神」 シリーズ女性と仏教 4, edited by Ōsumi Kazuo 大隅和雄 and Nishiguchi Junko 西口順子, 153–240 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1987); Hinonishi Shinjō 日野西眞定, “Kōyasan no nyonin kinzei (jō)” 高野山の女人禁制 (上), *Setsuwa daigaku kenkyū* 説話大学研究 27 (1992): 13–23; Katsuura Noriko 勝浦令子, *Kodai, Chūsei no josei to bukkyō* 古代・中世の女性と仏教 (Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 2003). In English, consult D. Max Moerman, *Localizing Paradise: Kumano Pilgrimage and the Religious Landscape of Premodern Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard East Asian Center, 2005) and Faure, *The Power of Denial*.

summoned up a dragon with spells and tried to ride it up the mountain. She got only as far as the source of the stream and was unable to proceed.

Toran became furious and stamped on the rocky peaks until everywhere everything was crushed or split. The lake which nurtured her dragon is under a rock. Her two footprints are still there. People say that she attained the Way of Long Life, and nothing is known of how she ended.<sup>35</sup>

An earlier version of the story can be found in the eleventh-century *Honchō shinsenden* 本朝神仙傳 (*Biographies of immortals in our country*), diary of courtier and poet Ōe no Masafusa 大江匡房 (1041–1111). It adds that Kinpusen was a “place of precepts” (*kaichi* 戒地) protected by Kongō Zaō 金剛座王 who awaited the arrival of Maitreya and that Toran was turned into a tree because of her transgression.<sup>36</sup>

Furthermore, it is not clear whether a boundary line existed before and was “tested” by the situation, or whether En no Gyōja created it himself. Women who

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<sup>35</sup> Marian Ury, “Genkō Shakusho, Japan's First Comprehensive History of Buddhism: a Partial Translation, with Introduction and Notes” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1970), 312–313.

<sup>36</sup> *NST*, 7:260, 581. The *Honchō shinsenden* is referenced in Shudō, *Kinpusenji*, 48, Suzuki, *Nyonin kinsei*, 82–83, and Katsuura, *Kodai, Chūsei no josei to Bukkyō*, 36. Another example of the nun/shamaness trope can be found in the *Hieizan ryakki* 比叡山略記 (*Abbreviated Chronicles of Mt. Hiei*), which describes the young female disciple of Saichō named Tora. The young woman is infatuated with Saichō and follows him up the mountain. In response, Saichō begs for divine help to get rid of her. In regard to Kōyasan, records of the Retired Emperor Go Uda's outings (*Go Uda jōkō gokō ki* 後宇多上皇御幸記, 1313) mention a nun Tora (*Tora bikuni* 都藍比丘尼); they tell of a great number of women who wanted to see the Emperor and therefore disguised themselves as men and broke the boundary but were chased down by temple people as thunder and lightning rained down. Moerman, *Localizing Paradise*, 206. Numerous other tales about a similar nun/shamaness emerge from the medieval period onward that describe either an elderly or young woman possessing some sort of magical power who often comes riding on an animal and is turned into stone or a tree after attempting to climb a sacred mountain despite the mountain god's warnings. Moerman's chapter on the position of women in the Kumano mountain cult (esp. 189–208) can be consulted for more on Toran and narrative accounts of female exclusion in the premodern period.

dared cross the line, we learn from other stories, faced terrible consequences. They might enrage the jealous female mountain god to cause torrential rain, fire, or even blood to pour down. Alternatively, the trespassing woman might be turned into stone.<sup>37</sup> Interestingly, a five-meter-long stone along the ascent to Sanjōgatake called the Turtle Stone (*Okame ishi* お亀石), set apart by a stone perimeter and regarded as off-limits to men, is explained as the site where En no Gyōja's mother turned into a turtle in order to visit her son in the mountains (Figure 1.26).

Before 1970, when practical concerns prompted Ōminesan authorities to move the boundary line to the Bridge of Great Purity, Mother's Hall served as the Sanjōgatake trailhead and visitors had to pass through a large black gate that stood between the hall and the river. It was open from dawn to dusk, and served as a checkpoint (Figure 1.27). The *Yoshinogun meizan zue* 吉野郡名山圖會 (*Illustrated Survey of Famous Mountains in the Yoshino District*) from the Edo period notes:

Out onto the main road, if you go beyond the Praying Mantis Cave and teahouse, and continue to the left of the river, there is a small bridge.

Woman can come as far as this place. From here upward women are forbidden. There is a hermitage to the right of the road, joined by a square stupa on the left of the road.<sup>38</sup>

*Hondō ni dete, tōrō ga iwaya chaya yori oku e ikeba, kawa o hidari to shite iki, kobashi ari. Kono tokoro made nyonin kuru. Kore yori ue wa, onna kinseinari. Michi no migi ni anshitsu ari, michi hidari ni kakutōba o tsuranetari.*

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<sup>37</sup> Yanagita Kunio 柳田国男, "Rōjo kaseki tan" 老女化石譚, in *Teihon Yanagita Kunio zenshū* 定本柳田国男全集 (Chikuma Shobō, 1916 [1962]), vol. 9, 1.

<sup>38</sup> Quoted in Nakamura Yoshihito 仲芳人, "Ōminesanji shūhen no nyonin kekkai hi" 大峯山寺周辺の女人結界碑, *Ashinaka* あしなか 5, no. 15, (1989): 14.

本道に出て、蟻螂が窟茶屋より奥へ行けば、川をひだりとして行き、小橋有り。この処まで女人来る。これより上は、女禁制なり。道の右に庵室有り、道左に角塔婆を連ねたり。

The hermitage described in this nineteenth-century publication likely refers to the Mother's Hall, judging by its location relative to the Praying Mantis Cave. Female exclusion is mentioned, but it makes no mention of stone or wooden markers. In general, we know very little about other pre-Meiji boundary lines demarcating Sanjōgatake as a male pilgrims' mecca. Women seem to have been banned from a much larger yet even less clearly defined area. In theory, the bounded realm would have spanned the entire Ōmine Okugake Trail—south from Hongū Shrine in Kumano to Ozasa, and north from Sanjōgatake to Yoshinoyama.

For example, an 1839 Shōgo'in mountain-entering (*nyūbu* 入峯) itinerary records a women's boundary (*nyonin kinkai* 女人禁界) at a site near Shakagatake south toward Kumano (reference Figure 1.2). It was marked by two stones just beyond two large cliffs, likely at the present site of Two Stones (*Futatsu ishi* 二つ石):

There are two large rocks, called Kongara and Seitaka, every time this is committed to writing there are people who get lost around here, as far as Kurikara Stone and Maruishi Stone, women can climb, but beyond that is a realm prohibited to women.<sup>39</sup>

*Dai naru iwa ni ari, Kongara, seitaka to iu, bun ni ka suru tabi ni kono hen nite funshitsu no hito ari, kurikara seki, maruishi to iu tokoro made nyonin noborunari, sore yori nyonin kinkai.*

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<sup>39</sup> Hirayama Toshijirō 平山敏治郎, "Tenpō jūnen shōgoin miya irimine suihandi" 天保十年聖護院宮入峯随伴記, *Kashihara kōkogaku kenkyūjo ronshū* 榎原考古学研究所論集 7 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1984), 359. Two Stones is station 33 on today's Okugake Trail.

大なる岩ニアリ、金伽羅、セイタカト云、文化度此辺ニテ紛失ノ人  
アリ、クリカラ石、丸石ト云所迄女人登也、夫より女人禁界

Leading up to 1970, however, the bounded realm stood at Dorogawa's Mother's Hall to the west, Aonegamine in Yoshino to the north, and Ozasa to the south. Ōminesan's current bounded realm extends ten kilometers east to west and twenty-four kilometers north to south. Goban Pass, the new northernmost point, is located twelve kilometers south of Aonegamine and is insignificant in the history of religious training. Its location shifts the northern boundary of the restricted space significantly south toward Sanjōgatake, while the rest of the coordinates were only modestly adjusted to re-expand. Additionally, as indicated in Figure 1.5, the restricted realm is also marked at the Lotus Crossing between Inamuragatake and Sanjōgatake, as mentioned above, and Amida Forest (*Amidagamori* 阿弥陀ヶ森) in the southeast. A brief note on Aonegamine, Goban Pass, and Amida Forest follows to supplement the descriptions given above of the other sites.

The path to Aonegamine from Kinpusenji begins with a steep ascent up Yoshinoyama, through Nakasenbon 中千本 (home to the four temples that play a role in Yoshino's management of Ōminesan: Chikurin'in, Tōnan'in 東南院, Kizō'in 喜蔵院, and Sakuramotobō 桜本坊), to Kamisenbon 上千本, and eventually Okusenbon 奥千本, site of Kinpu Shrine 金峯神社. The long and winding Okugake Trail heads south from here. Embarking on it from behind the small shrine, a three-way fork in the trail appears. Turning right will lead to Ōminesan, straight ahead to Kawakami Village 川上村, and left to Aonegamine, the watershed of Yoshinoyama. The official

boundary line moved from Kinpu Shrine to Aonegamine in 1878.<sup>40</sup> The fork in the road (known among Shugendō practitioners as Aizen no juku 愛染宿, station 70 of the 75-station course) is marked by the third of the extant boundary stones. This is the smallest and oldest of the three (the other two standing at the Mother’s Hall and Ryūsenji), and it reads “Women Forbidden Beyond This Point” (*kore yori nyonin kekkai* 從是女人結界; height 146cm, circumference 30cm) (Figure 1.28). We know from the inscription that it is an 1865 replacement for a stone made in 1754. Records prior to 1754, however, concerning Aonegamine make no mention of women or stone markers.<sup>41</sup> Today, Aonegamine no longer holds an active role in Ōminesan’s bounded realm. Only traces remain, set in stone. The same can be said of the boundary stones at the Mother’s Hall and the temple Ryūsenji because of physical reconfigurations of the boundary lines in the twentieth-century.

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<sup>40</sup> Shudō, *Kinpusenji*, 270; *Shin jidai ni muketa Shugen sanbonsan no kiseki* 新時代に向けた修験三本山の軌跡 (En no Gyōja sen sanbyaku nen go-onki kiroku hensan iinkai 役行者千三百年御遠忌記録編纂委員会, 2003, hereafter *Shin jidai*), 108.

<sup>41</sup> According to the *Yoshinoyama hitori annai ki* 吉野山独案内記 (*Chronicles of Yoshino mountain guides*, 1671):

Heading out a little from Anzenji is Aorigatake. From this place there are two paths. The left is a path toward the waterfall of Nishikawa, the right is more than five *ri* [roughly twenty kilometers] until the mountain top.

*Anzenji o dete sukoshi ikeba Aorigatake ari. Kono tokoro yori michi futasuji ari. Hidari wa Nishikawa no taki e iku michi, migi wa sanjō made ha go ri yo ari*

安禅寺を出てすこし行けば青折嶽あり。この所より道二筋あり。ひだりは西河の滝へ行く道、右は山上までは五里余あり。

This seventeenth-century mountain guide unmistakably describes the same place, albeit under different names, but makes no mention of female prohibition or a stone marker (or the station name Aizen no juku, for that matter). I follow Nakamura, “Ōminesanji shūhen no nyonin kekkai hi,” 14, for the modern rendering of the original text, which I consulted in *Yoshino yumemi kusa, Yoshinoyama hitori annai* 吉野夢見草・吉野山独案内, as presented in *Hanpon chishi taikei betsu* 版本地誌大系別 3 (Kyoto: Rinsen Shoten, 2010), 453–458.

The “new” Aonegamine is Goban Pass; noted above as the current northern reach of the bounded realm, it lies at the lowest part of a mountain ridge linking Ōtenjōgatake and Sanjogatake. The name Gobanseki 碁盤石 originally referred to the grid designs of a *go* game board, which the bedrock in the vicinity resembled. At some point it came to be transcribed Gobanseki 五番関, connoting its convenient location as a connecting point for plateau villages above the river down to Dorogawa. The site is relatively difficult to access, even with a new mountain road and tunnel cutting beneath the present Goban Pass site. A small En no Gyōja shrine sits near a wooden gate with accompanying English/Japanese signage (Figure 1.29).

To the southeast, another new boundary gate stands at Amida Forest, where the southern Okugake Trail and another trail east from Kashiwagi 柏木 intersect (Figure 1.30). As with Aonegamine, the boundary moved here from Ozasa in 1878. The absence of a boundary gate at Amida Forest until 1970, however, led many to believe that the boundary itself was moved in 1970, timed with the other reductions.

## Conclusions

On a cool August evening in 2015, I witnessed En no Gyōja with my own eyes. He passed through Dorogawa’s “Ascetic Avenue” (*Gyōja dōri* 行者通り) on a palanquin adorned with candles and a throne. He had donned a long white beard and clasped a silver mountain staff (*shakujō* 錫杖). His fierce-faced companions Zenki and Goki wore gold robes and crouched at his sides. Crowds lined the street, and people young and old applauded his presence (pictured in Figure 1.3).<sup>42</sup> The yearly Ascetic’s

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<sup>42</sup> Today, the Zenki lineage is said to protect an eponymous area of Ōminesan, and the Goki lineage continues in Dorogawa. As I learned, it is not uncommon for cousins to marry in order to preserve the “Goki spirit.” Kyōtani’s parents, for example, are cousins from the same Kyōtani family.

Festival (*Gyōja Matsuri* 行者祭) held in early August is said to re-enact the past, when villagers rejoiced at En no Gyōja's return from exile. Modernity had clearly intervened in this tradition, however. "En no Gyōja" was in fact a young man wearing a fake beard (another version of the figure roaming the streets was played by a young woman; Figure 1.31), the palanquin was the flatbed of a compact white truck, the candles were electric, and the demons were visiting from Osaka.

At the Shingon temple Hōkakuji 鳳閣寺 near Yoshino, moreover, the skull of the giant male snake that Shōbō Rigen Daishi vanquished is stored in his mausoleum, which is designated an Important Cultural Property (*jūyō bunkazai* 重要文化財). Clearly, the line between an imagined past and present-day reality is blurred. Like En no Gyōja, Shōbō is also "alive" at the mountain today. At one observance at Ryūsenji, presided over by head priest Okada Echio 岡田悦雄, I was urged by a female devotee to stand close to the smoking pine embers and "speak" to him (Figure 1.32).

Ōminesan is a "multitude of intersections," quite literally—the land itself acts as a repository for history and tradition.<sup>43</sup> We cannot understand the mountain's physical and built landscapes without paying attention to the mythic and religious dimensions, which anchor them in an ancient past, and yet we cannot trust in this ancient past as a static and unchanging reservoir of sacred legitimacy. Chinese religions scholar James Robson observes in his study of China's sacred peak Nanyue 南嶽 (Jpn. *Nangaku*) that "only a special person can recognize the hidden numinous qualities of a site, but

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<sup>43</sup> Henri Lefebvre, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith, *The Production of Space* (Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishing, 1991 [1974]), 33. Lefebvre's three-part structure of space (physical, mental, and cultural) has been applied widely in studies of sacred space in Japan.

that person's presence at the site—and when he or she is gone, the person's traces—enhances the sacred nature of the site.”<sup>44</sup>

The traces of En no Gyōja, Shōbō Rigen Daishi, and Shiratōme certainly guide perceptions of Ōminesan's sacredness and influence the manner in which one experiences its physical landscapes, and yet they are constantly remodeled and remolded in a broader context of worldly conveniences and concerns. Supporters of female exclusion may fervently defend it as a 1300-year-old religious tradition, but the 1970 boundary renegotiation reflects a practical logic (i.e., moving the boundary lines was a practical and effective method of problem solving) that privileges contemporary concerns over longstanding religious traditions. The realities of constant innovation, choice, and change are impossible to ignore, and in fact the current literature from the Mother's Hall acknowledges this, describing the 1970 remapping as “the present keeping with the changing times” (*jisei no henka ni awase genzai* 時勢の変化に合わせて現在). On the other hand, the great variance we see in Ōminesan's boundary lines, place names, and legends is often omitted or neutralized in the name of “tradition,” which presupposes something stable and invariable.

This chapter explored Ōminesan's distinctive significance—what sets it apart and where it is set apart—and provided several examples of how those strategies of “setting apart” have changed, the most central of which occurred in 1970 with the reduction of Sanjōgatake's bounded realm. The relative ease with which this rebounding was accomplished may give the false impression that female exclusion as a lived religious tradition is also easily maintained. To the contrary, as the following chapters demonstrate, the modern historical narrative of women and Ōminesan is

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<sup>44</sup> Robson, *Power of Place*, 25.

marked by contestation and conflict, beginning with the 1872 legal abolishment of female exclusion by the Meiji government.

## Chapter Two:

### State Visions, Local Realities

“It’s a miracle!” exclaimed travel-writer Okada Kishū 岡田喜秋 in 1970, musing on the fact that in Japan there still existed a mountain off-limits to women. Indeed, it is nothing short of remarkable that Ōminesan’s religious tradition of female exclusion survived a long century marked by great social and political change.<sup>1</sup> Until the late nineteenth century, many of Japan’s sacred mountains were closed to women (specifically, clearly defined areas in the proximity of established worship facilities or centers of lay religious gathering, as well as the temples and shrines themselves). There were noteworthy exceptions, however. By 1860, women were already welcomed at the summit of Fujisan, the iconic Japanese peak that drew the largest number of visitors per year.<sup>2</sup> And at Kōyasan, as I discuss below, women remained *persona non grata* until 1904. Ōminesan’s Sanjōgatake peak, the subject of this study, is often celebrated as the last frontier of female exclusion in Japan.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Okada (legal first name is Yoshiaki) reported for the travel magazine *Tabi* 旅 for twelve years before serving as editor-in-chief for twelve more years. In his article, Okada makes specific mention of the Meiji Restoration, the post-World War II constitution, and Japanese women climbing the European Alps and the Himalayas as twentieth-century hurdles to maintaining the exclusion of women. Okada Kishū 岡田喜秋, “Nyonin kinsei yuragu Ōminesan,” 128.

<sup>2</sup> According to Fumiko Miyazaki 宮崎ふみ子, women had been climbing the famous peak whenever the chance arose from long before. See Miyazaki, “Female Pilgrims and Mt. Fuji: Changing Perspectives on the Exclusion of Women,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 60, no. 3 (2005): 339–391.

<sup>3</sup> In fact, this widely repeated claim of exceptionalism is not entirely true. Mount Ushiro (*Ushiroyama* 後山) in Okayama Prefecture also officially maintains a male-only policy. Ishizuchisan in Shikoku remains off-limits to women except for one day a year (July 1). Mount Uzō (*Uzōsan* 宇曾山) in Kyushu’s Oita Prefecture 大分県 opens to women only on New Year’s Day and the Autumn equinox. Still, a single place comes to mind most often when speaking about female exclusion: Ōminesan.

The legality of Ōminesan's ban on women has often been called into question. In 2004, for example, a citizen's group collected more than 12,000 signatures in protest at Ōminesan's designation as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, arguing that it violated laws concerning gender discrimination and public access.<sup>4</sup> The land surrounding Ōminesanji (the mountaintop temple at Sanjōgatake) is privately owned, but the restricted area includes public lands as well (Figure 2.1).

The practice of banning women from mountain temples, shrines, and trails was in fact legally terminated in the late nineteenth century. According to Meiji government edict, dated May 4, 1872:

Grand Council of State Edict 98

Any remaining practices of female exclusion on shrine and temple lands shall be immediately abolished, and mountain climbing for the purpose of worship, etc. shall be permitted.<sup>5</sup>

太政官布告第九八號

神社佛閣ノ地ニテ女人結界ノ場所有之候処自今被廢止候条登山参詣等可為勝手事

*Dajōkan fukoku dai kyū hachi gō*

*Jinja bukkaku no chi nite nyonin kekkai no basho kore arisōroishi tokoro  
ima yori haishi seraresoroishi jō tozan sankei nado katte to subeki koto*

Edict 98 provides the first documentary evidence that discusses female exclusion in

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<sup>4</sup> Chapter three examines the 2004 World Heritage designation and allegations concerning the illegality of female exclusion in detail.

<sup>5</sup> Naikaku Kanpōkyoku 内閣官報局編, *Hōrei zensho* 法令全書 5(1) (Tokyo: Hara shobō, 1974), 82. Also cited in Washio Junkyō 鷺尾順敬 and Jinki Hōju 神龜法寿, “Nyonin kekkai no haishi tenmatsu,” 女人結界の廢止顛末, *Gendai Bukkyō* 現代佛教 (1933): 230. It appears in Miyake with slightly different punctuation: 神社佛閣ノ地ニテ女人結界ノ場所有之候処、自今被廢止候条、登山参詣等可為勝手事. *Ōmine Shugendō no kenkyū*, 391.

contemporary terms. In other words, it neither locates it in the past nor refers to it as a timeless, ancient custom. This chapter unpacks its significance in three parts. First, I introduce the state of affairs at Ōminesan in the early Meiji period. I attempt to situate Edict 98 within the broader push for secularization by the Meiji government, exemplified by the 1868 separation of buddhas and gods and the dismantling of Shugendō in 1872. Through these and other measures, which had far-reaching consequences at Ōminesan, the state sought to equalize religious institutions and religious clerics, resulting in the undercutting of the traditionally privileged position of Buddhism.

Second, I trace the path toward the promulgation of Edict 98 by examining an 1872 dialogue between Shiga 滋賀 prefectural authorities and central government authorities, including the Ministry of Finance (*Ōkurashō* 大蔵省), the Ministry of Doctrinal Instruction (*Kyōbushō* 教部省), and the Grand Council of State (*Dajōkan* 太政官). The conversation, directed toward Hieizan, would culminate in the legal abolishment of female exclusion nationwide. I then survey the edict's reception at Kōyasan in Wakayama Prefecture. Kōyasan provides an analogue that can help fill in the gaps at Ōminesan, where documentary sources are not forthcoming about the edict's reception. Each part highlights in microcosm a different aspect of the juxtaposition between what the Meiji state created as a legal culture versus actual practice.

To reconstruct the events of 1872 and their import in greater detail, I closely follow a report by Washio Junkyō 鷺尾順敬 (1868–1941) and Jinki Hōju 神亀法寿 (d. 1953). Their “Circumstances for Abolishing Women’s Boundaries” (“Nyonin kekkai no haishi tenmatsu” 女人結界の廢止顛末) appeared in the journal *Gendai*

*Bukkyō* 現代佛教 (*The Contemporary Buddhism*) in 1933. The Washio-Jinki report provides key insights and includes to my knowledge the only extant transcript of the 1872 exchange between prefectural and national authorities. Washio, a scholar of Buddhism, published eleven books and sixteen articles on the history of Buddhism in Japan. Jinki (legal name Nakada Hōju 中田法寿) was the sixteenth-generation head priest of the temple Nisseki'ji 日石寺 at Mount Ōiwa (*Ōiwasan* 大岩山) in Toyama Prefecture. Jinki wrote several articles on Edo- and Meiji-period Kōyasan history in the late 1920s and early 1930s.

Despite its rarity and narration of a fascinating tale of state visions and sacred spaces, the Washio-Jinki report has been largely overlooked by more recent scholarship, which pays astonishingly little attention—in some cases none at all—to the historical and legal dimensions of female exclusion in the modern period. Miyake's 700-page study of religion at Ōminesan, for example, devotes only four pages to the historical dimensions of female exclusion. This privileging of premodern and ideological contours, part of a larger historiographical trend, contributes to enduring (and problematic) perceptions of female exclusion as ancient and unchanging.

### Situating Edict 98

The 1872 edict came as part of a new state vision intended to unify and control Japan's religious landscape. Therefore, before unpacking the edict itself, it is first necessary to situate Ōminesan within the legal and political milieu of the late nineteenth century. The early Meiji period is characterized by a swift influx of Western culture and ideas, including those concerning religion. Longstanding state patronage of Buddhism, which in some form had continued generally uninterrupted

since the Nara period, came to an abrupt end. As Japan historian James Ketelaar explains, the Meiji state viewed Buddhism as a dangerous “other,” a foreign institution that had been too powerful for too long.<sup>6</sup> A series of governmental acts issued from 1868 known as the “Gods and Buddhas Separation Orders” (*Shinbutsu bunrirei* 神佛分離令) sought to clarify the relationship between buddhas and gods. Such measures were an experiment aimed at creating a new Shintō-based ideology and pantheon. This state vision was never fully realized—Hardacre describes the early Meiji years in terms of “experimentation and disillusion”—but the policies had a significant impact on religion in the mountains.<sup>7</sup>

The “Separation Orders” put a halt to over a thousand years of combinatory religious practices. The practice of conferring Buddhist terms such as “avatar,” or *gongen* 権現 (i.e., Zaō Gongen), upon gods was for the first time prohibited. Buddhist icons and implements were ordered out of shrines, which in this context comes to refer to a worship facility that must adopt an exclusively “Shintō” identity. Under this “program of controlled atrophy,” the state additionally mandated the closing of halls (*dō* 堂) used for esoteric rituals or to house esoteric deities.<sup>8</sup> Ōminesan’s sacredness derived from a complex interweaving of gods and buddhas by the hands of an ambiguously defined collective of lay practitioners; here, the consequences were far reaching.

The government additionally promulgated rules that decriminalized certain religious practices and legally abolished others. Edict 98 falls under the latter

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<sup>6</sup> James Ketelaar, *Of Heretics and Martyrs in Meiji Japan: Buddhism and Its Persecution* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 50.

<sup>7</sup> Helen Hardacre, *Shinto and the State, 1868-1988* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 22.

<sup>8</sup> Ketelaar, *Of Heretics and Martyrs in Meiji Japan*, 50.

category. In terms of the former, in 1872 the government “ended all penalties for clerics who violated state and clerical standards of deportment by eating meat, marrying, letting their hair grow, or abandoning clerical dress.”<sup>9</sup> “Cleric” refers to Buddhists who have entered religious orders or who reside at Buddhist religious sites. Amidst this program of radical change, Shugendō was banned outright in October 1872, deemed in Shugendō scholar Gaynor Sekimori’s terms a “superstitious and pernicious sect.”<sup>10</sup> Shugendō groups were forced to affiliate with either Tendai or Shingon Buddhist lineages. Buddhist clerics managing mountain shrines were forced to become shrine priests, take full ordination, as Tendai or Shingon priests, or return to lay life. Most chose the latter.<sup>11</sup>

The Zaō Hall in Yoshinoyama, an eighteenth-century hall that houses three seven-meter tall Zaō Gongen statues, was ordered to present its historical registers for investigation in May 1868. After requests to avoid reassigning and releasing personnel were denied, Kinpusenji was shut down entirely from 1874 to 1886, a period of twelve years.<sup>12</sup> In 1886, it was reestablished as a Buddhist temple affiliated

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<sup>9</sup> Richard Jaffe, “Meiji Religious Policy, Sōtō Zen, and the Clerical Marriage Problem,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 25, no. 1/2 (Spring 1998): 46.

<sup>10</sup> Gaynor Sekimori, “Review, Shugendō: The State of the Field,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 57, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 210.

<sup>11</sup> Sekimori estimates that that probably fewer than ten percent remained “Buddhist.” Around thirty percent became shrine priests, yet even then they were increasingly restricted by government regulations for shrine priests. *Ibid.*, 211.

<sup>12</sup> Interestingly, as Shudō explains, Yoshino locals voiced many concerns about the potentially negative impact of Meiji policies on pilgrimage practices and daily life in the mountains. These were drafted at Chikurin’in, but never submitted, and therefore not considered. *Kinpusenji*, 226–227.

to the Tendai school. The Okugake Trail itself fell into disuse, remaining largely untraveled until after World War II.<sup>13</sup>

In June of 1874, the state ordered that Sanjōgatake's mountaintop hall, then called the Sanjō Zaō Hall 山上蔵王堂 (rebuilt in 1691, enshrining Zaō Gongen, whom En no Gyōja purportedly raised up from its peak), become the Inner Precinct of the Kinpu Shrine (*Kinpu jinja oku no miya* 金峯神社奥宮), signifying a change in identity from Buddhist to Shintō. Its icons, including a typically hidden En no Gyōja statue from the fourteenth century, were removed and replaced by mirrors, signifying the space as a Shintō shrine.

With En no Gyōja and Zaō Gongen stripped of their home, Ōminesan's Shugendō devotees stopped visiting the mountain almost immediately. Yoshino and Dorogawa community members, desperate to maintain their local economies that relied heavily upon Shugendō devotees, crafted a plan to build a new worship hall at the peak just outside the Mountaintop Zaō Hall grounds (which, as already mentioned, the government ordered become the Inner Precinct of the Kinpu Shrine) and install the central En no Gyōja image and other icons there. With permission from the Nara prefectural government, they selected a one-hundred-fifty square meter plot of land some two hundred meters west of present-day Ōminesanji, and there rebuilt the Ascetic's Hall (*Gyōja dō* 行者堂) from Ozasa. About an hour's walk from Sanjōgatake, Ozasa had long served as a key religious training site for Tōzan Shugendō headquartered at Daigoji, a Shingon Buddhist temple in Kyoto. Zenpukuji 善福寺 in the town of Yoshinoyama and Ryūsenji in the town of Dorogawa had theretofore managed its worship hall jointly. Those two temples, representing the

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<sup>13</sup> Tatsumi Ryōnin 巽良仁, interview by the author, Sakuramotobō 桜本坊, November 9, 2014.

Yoshino area in the north and the Dorogawa area in the south, assumed management of the newly reconstructed Ascetic Hall at Sanjōgatake.

In May of 1886, the Ōmine mountaintop temple regained its status as a Buddhist temple (with Tendai affiliation), but the system of split management remained. Yoshinoyama laid claim to a land register (*chiken daichō* 地券台帳) of roughly 11,000m<sup>2</sup> (*icchō ittan isse hachibu* 一町一反一畝八歩) of government-owned land (*kanyūchi* 官有地). Dorogawa held a land register of just over 10,000m<sup>2</sup> (*icchō isse kyūbu* 一町一畝九歩) of government-owned land. In 1880, Dorogawa filed a petition with the Nara District Court, Sakurai Branch Chamber concerning the land holdings of the Inner Precinct of the Kinpu Shrine at Ōminesan but it was dismissed. They again petitioned in 1875 to the Osaka High Court, and received a favorable ruling, but this time Yoshinoyama complained to Daishin'in 大審院, Japan's prewar supreme court. On July 1, 1885, Yoshinoyama and Dorogawa entered into a joint agreement that stipulated the following: (1) written consent was required for pleas by both parties, (2) the name Mountaintop Zaō Hall (which would imply Yoshino precedence) would not be reinstated; (3) the Buddhist icons and hall itself would be jointly owned; (4) Yoshino would receive six-tenths of revenue shares to Dorogawa's four-tenths; (5) Dorogawa would retain control of Ozasa; and (6) Dorogawa alone would handle the sale of rhododendrons at the mountain.<sup>14</sup>

On May 19, 1886, a request was submitted to the Osaka prefectural governor to allow the Inner Precinct of the Kinpu Shrine to resume its identity as a Buddhist temple by a group consisting of two Kinpu Shrine priests, the head priests of Yoshinoyama temples Ryūsenji, Chikurin'in, Tōnan'in, and Sakuramotobō, along with five lay parishioner representatives from Dorogawa and four lay parishioner

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<sup>14</sup> Shudō, *Kinpusenji*, 247–248.

representatives from Yoshino. A similar request was submitted at the same time concerning the Zaō Hall in Yoshinoyama.

Since Yoshino and Dorogawa already at this point shared management and ownership of the mountaintop Ascetic Hall, both parties agreed that the Yoshino side would retain sole control of the Zaō Hall (renamed Kinpusenji, which it remains today as a Buddhist site) and the mountaintop hall would be called Ōmine Sanjō Hondō (renamed Ōminesanji in 1942), also a Buddhist site. Furthermore, the group of three Yoshino temples and one Dorogawa temple that appealed for the title reversal officially took the name Goji'in 護持院 on June 1, 1892. Kizō'in, another Buddhist temple in Yoshino, joined the consortium after regaining its status as a Buddhist temple in 1888. These five temples reflect three religious lineages—the Shingon lineage of Daigoji in Kyoto, the Tendai of Shōgo'in in Kyoto, and Kinpusenji—and thus giving rise to the later nickname “Three Main Mountains” (*Sanbonsan* 三本山, this consortium's controversial role in managing Ōminesan is detailed in chapter four).<sup>15</sup>

### Explaining Edict 98

The Meiji state expressed a keen interest in redefining Japan's religious realm, and gender-based regulations and restrictions were one such area deemed in need of reform. The fledgling government viewed female exclusion as a religious practice. The correlation between these two points, however, is not readily apparent. Hearsay abounds, as I discuss below, yet there is little clarity or consensus regarding the reasons behind the Meiji government's specific targeting of female exclusion from

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<sup>15</sup> For a period of time, the head priest of Kinpusenji doubled as the head priest of Sakuramotobō. See chapter four for a more detailed treatment of Ōminesan's management structure.

mountain temples and trails among local people, institutional affiliates, and scholars.

The account of Zenitani Osamu 銭谷修, former parishioner representative of

Ryūsenji in Dorogawa, represents what has become a standard interpretation:

The government lifted prohibitions against women in 1872 (Meiji 5). They had decided to invite foreigners, including women, to an exhibition to be held in Kyoto that year. The government issued a proclamation lifting female prohibition, citing the possibility that these foreigners may want to visit the sacred mountains in the vicinity of Kyoto. In response, sacred mountains nationwide, one after another, lifted the prohibition. At that time, Yoshino also tried to open the mountain and give women permission to climb it, but Dorogawa stubbornly opposed what the government said and did not listen to it.<sup>16</sup>

*Seifu ga, nyoninkinzei o toita no wa, sen happyaku nanajū ni -nen (Meiji 5) deshita. Sono toshi ni Kyōto de hirakareru hakurankai e josei o fukumu gaikoku hito no raihin o maneku koto ni natte itaga, sorera no hitobito ga Kyōto kinkō no reizan o kenbutsu suru koto ni narudearou, nado to iu riyū kara, seifu kara nyoninkinsei o toku yō ni to iu ofure ga demashita. Kore o ukete zenkoku kakuchi no reizan wa aitsuide kinsei o toita nodesu.*

*Sonotoki, yoshinoyama mo josei ni kaihō shite nobotte itadaku kyōka o*

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<sup>16</sup> Zenitani, “Kono mama ni shitete hoshii” このままにしてほしい, in *Nyonin kinzei: gendai kegare, kiyome kō*, by Kizu Yuzuru 木津譲, 86–101 (Osaka: Kaihō Shuppansha, 1992), 92. Kizu, an advocate for opening Ōminesan to women, has been criticized by scholars like Suzuki Masataka for being biased, but his monograph includes this original essay by Zenitani and the full transcript of an interview with then Ryūsenji head priest Okada Ikuyū 岡田育雄, and thus offers rare firsthand insights into important events at the mountain in the twentieth century that most scholars cite, Suzuki included. Zenitani’s recounting of Meiji period events, however, is less reliable.

*dasou to shita nodesuga, kono Dorogawa wa, gan to shite hantai shite  
seifu no iu koto o kikanakatta nodesu.*

政府が、女人禁制を解いたのは、一八七二年（明治5）でした。その年に京都で開かれる博覧会へ女性を含む外国人の来賓を招くことになっていたが、それらの人びとが京都近郊の霊山を見物することになるであろう、などという理由から、政府から女人禁制をとくようにというお触れが出ました。これを受けて全国各地の霊山は相ついで禁制を解いたのです。その時、吉野山も女性に開放して登っていただく許可を出そうとしたのですが、この洞川は、がんとして反対して政府の言うことを聞かなかったのです。

In a word, Zenitani claims that the Meiji edict was prompted by an exhibition in Kyoto. The 1933 Washio-Jinki report, introduced at the beginning of this chapter, stands as the earliest evidence I have been able to locate in support of this.<sup>17</sup> Washio writes:

In Meiji 5 [1872], there was talk in Kyoto of hosting an exhibition, and a variety of preparations were underway by the prefectural government. An exhibition meant people from around the world would gather in Kyoto and tour the area around Kyoto and Shiga prefectures, and they most certainly would want to ascend Hieizan and enjoy views of Lake Biwa. If permitted

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<sup>17</sup> Itō cites Washio in her 1988 M.A. thesis, written under the guidance of Miyake, whose work unfortunately is not forthcoming on the matter. “Ōminesan no nyonin kinsei,” 28. Suzuki Masataka presents the art show claim as fact, with no accompanying citation. *Nyonin kinsei*, 9. In academic circles today, this explanation continues to hold the most weight.

to do so in Kyoto and Shiga prefectures, this meant that not only men but women would have also joined the tour groups.<sup>18</sup>

*Meiji go nen ni Kyōto de hakurankai o kaisai shiyō to iu node, fuchō de shohan no junbi serarete ita no de aru ga. Hakurankai ni wa, shogaikokujin ga raishū shi, Kyōtofu Shigaken no chihō o keikai shite yūran suru koto to nari, kanarazu Hieizan ni nobotte, Biwako no fūkei o shōmi suru koto-tomo narou. Kyōtofu Shigaken de kore o kyōka suru koto to nareba, karera wa danshi bakaridenaku ikkō ni wa joshi mo aru kotodearou to iu kotodeatta.*

明治5年に京都で博覧会を開催しようとするので、府廳で諸般の準備せられてみたのであるが。博覧会には、諸外国人が来集し、京都府滋賀県の地方を經回して遊覽することとなり、必ず比叡山に登つて、琵琶湖の風景を賞觀することともならう。京都府滋賀県でこれを許可する事となれば、彼等は男子ばかりでなく一行には女子もあることであらうと云う事であった。

According to historians Ayako Hotta-Lister, Ian Nish, and Olive Checkland, the state drive to create international exhibitions was spearheaded by statesman Ōkubo Toshimichi 大久保利通 (1830–1878) after he attended an 1873 exhibition in Vienna.<sup>19</sup> An Exhibition of Arts & Manufactures was held in Kyoto in 1872, but a private exhibition company organized it, not the Meiji government. As noted by

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<sup>18</sup> Washio and Jinki, “Nyonin kekkai no haishi tenmatsu,” 230.

<sup>19</sup> Ayako Hotta-Lister and Ian Nish, *Commerce and Culture at the 1910 Japan-British Exhibition Centenary Perspectives* (Leiden: Global Oriental, 2013); Olive Checkland, *Japan and Britain After 1859: Creating Cultural Bridges* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003).

Hotta-Lister and Nish, “with the establishment of private exhibition companies...larger scale exhibitions than previously began to be held, starting in Kyoto and Tokyo in 1872...privately run companies, public bodies, and newspaper companies accounted for the majority of the organizers of most of the domestic exhibitions in this period.”<sup>20</sup> Checkland confirms that the 1872 exhibition was privately organized and that Japan’s first large-scale domestic industrial exposition (*kokunai kangyō hakurankai* 内国勸業博覧会) was held in 1877 at Ueno Park in Tokyo.<sup>21</sup>

Literature from the city of Kyoto itself, however, states that an exhibition was held at Buddhist temple, the Nishi Honganji, in 1871. The Kyoto Exhibition Company (*Kyoto hakurankai sha* 京都博覧会社), established at this time, organized another exhibition the following year (1872) at three Kyoto temples (Kenninji 建仁寺, Chion’in 知恩院, and Nishi Honganji 西本願寺).<sup>22</sup> Partial corroboration is provided by records in the 1876 *Official Catalog of the British Section*, which indicate that a “privately held” Kyoto arts and manufacturing exhibition opened on April 17, 1872, and ran for fifty days, showcasing many objects that were taken to Vienna the following year.<sup>23</sup> In addition, the travelogues of Dr. William Willis, who was in Japan at the time with British diplomat and Japanologist Ernest Satow, refer to the show. Willis described treasures from within and without Japan displayed on temple grounds, including musical instruments, bronze vases, animal skulls, gold and silver

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<sup>20</sup> Hotta-Lister and Nish, *Commerce and Culture*, 219.

<sup>21</sup> Checkland, *Japan and Britain After 1859*, 38.

<sup>22</sup> Kyoto City Official Website, <https://www.city.kyoto.jp/somu/rekishi/fm/nenpyou/htmlsheet/toshi29.html> (accessed October 25, 2015).

<sup>23</sup> Great Britain. *Official Catalogue of the British Section* (London: Printed by G.E. Eyre and W. Spottiswoode, for H.M.S.O., 1876).

objects, and oddities such as New Zealand moa-bird bones and photographs of the English royal family. Willis noted one conspicuously absent element: other foreigners. He estimated that only half-a-dozen foreign visitors could be found in Kyoto for the show.<sup>24</sup>

The 1872 exhibition is widely cited as the central motivating factor behind Edict 98, but the available documentary evidence does not demonstrate how the exhibition provides a compelling motive for the edict. Some scholars, such as folklorist Iwashina Kōichiro 岩科小一郎, also suggest that since the Meiji state's vision of a culturally and religiously unified Japan meant doing away with superstitious and outdated practices, female exclusion was targeted for excision.<sup>25</sup> Suzuki similarly notes that the state considered female prohibition an “outdated feudalistic custom” (*hōkenteki na okureta kankō* 封建的な遅れた慣行). According to Washio's 1933 report:

Hieizan allowing foreign men to ascend the mountain while banning accompanying women in the name of women's boundaries would be a bigoted practice. Actually engaging in such a practice would be inappropriate in these modern enlightened times.<sup>26</sup>

その場合に比叡山は、女人結界であると云ひ、外國人の男子の上  
ことを許可し、一行の女子の登ることを禁止すると云うことは固  
陋の弊習である。今日開明の時節に實際に行はるべきことでない。

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<sup>24</sup> Willis quoted in Hugh Cortazzi *Dr. Willis in Japan, 1862-1877: British Medical Pioneer* (London: Athlone Press, 1985), 179–196.

<sup>25</sup> Iwashina Kōichiro 岩科小一郎, *Yama no minzoku* 山の民俗 (Iwasaki bijutsu sha, 1968), 9. See esp. 9–45 on female exclusion from mountains.

<sup>26</sup> Washio and Jinki, “Nyonin kekkai no haishi tenmatsu,” 230.

This line of reasoning does not explain why the edict targeted mountains specifically, however, and not any of the other varieties of female exclusion, such as entering shrines and temples that were not in mountains, participating in festivals like Gion Matsuri 祇園祭 in Kyoto, brewing sake, or firing kilns.

Most local people I interviewed in Dorogawa and Yoshino—including Ryūsenji’s head priest, Kyōtani of the Tenkawa Research Association, former mountain guides Taniguchi and Masutani, and others—support this interpretation. These four individuals offer a different perspective on Edict 98, claiming it was a strategy designed to weaken powerful Shugendō institutions. The Meiji government viewed female exclusion as a Shugendō “convention” (*shikitari* 仕来り), Okada explained, “even though in reality it is not.”<sup>27</sup> In all likelihood, Edict 98 was the culmination of all three—an art show (even if it was privately organized), a move to cast aside outdated practices, and a legal policy intended to destabilize what the state regarded as fringe religious elements.

Turning to the reception of Edict 98 at Ōminesan, a lack of sources again prevents a clear understanding of the state of affairs. The standard interpretation is that Yoshino decided to open Sanjōgatake to women but that Dorogawa refused. In Miyake’s words, Yoshino was “unable to ignore the government decree” but was

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<sup>27</sup> Okada Echio 岡田悦雄, interview by the author, Ryūsenji, May 3, 2015. Female exclusion is sometimes regarded as an expressly Shugendō practice, but this view is fundamentally misguided. Female exclusion is a culture of its own in Japan, and mountain entrance is just one of many manifestations, other examples include shrine entry, festival participation, sake brewing, and kiln firing. Nevertheless, the active prohibition of women from Shugendō-affiliated mountain sites compels such a perception, and with partial justification, since Shugendō affiliates themselves often argue that Ōminesan’s sacredness will be lost if women are allowed entrance to Sanjōgatake.

prevented by Dorogawa.<sup>28</sup> This can be explained in broad terms by the powerful role played by lay male guilds, upon whom Dorogawa's lifeblood depended (see chapter four). Still, agency and context for the most part remain a mystery. According to Dorogawa elder Masutani, drawing on stories passed down in his family, *yamabushi* warned that they would protect the mountain from opening, "by force if necessary."<sup>29</sup>

We do know that Ōminesan's ban on women was interpreted as private "religious rule" (*shūki* 宗規) in 1878. This is connected to the February 1878 issuance of Edict 133, an amendment to previous legislation concerning priests' freedom to eat meat and marry. As Richard Jaffe, scholar of modern Japanese Buddhism, explains, Edict 133 functioned to strike down previous legislation prohibiting such activities. The 1878 clarification may have been specifically directed toward Buddhist monastic regulations, but it set an important precedent for separating state and religious policies.<sup>30</sup> Ōminesan affiliates—although sources do not clarify precisely whom—broadly interpreted it as legal support for maintaining Sanjōgatake's ban on women.

#### Promulgating the Edict (Hieizan)

Hieizan, rising 848 meters in the northeast of Kyoto, has served as the headquarters for Japan's Tendai school of Buddhism since Saichō 最澄 (767–822) founded it at the end of the eighth century. Records of a religious ban on women at Hieizan in the

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<sup>28</sup> Miyake, *Ōmine Shugendō no kenkyū*, 391; repeated by Suzuki, *Nyonin kinsei*, 32.

<sup>29</sup> Masutani, interview by the author, July 18, 2014.

<sup>30</sup> Jaffe continues, "This modification clarified the separation between state law and sectarian concerns, allowing individual denominations to determine for their own followers what religious strictures they should follow." Further, concerning women lodging in temples, he writes "although from an administrative perspective Edict 133 of 1872 states that the government will not prevent the marriage of Buddhist clerics, the Additional Proclamation of 1875 from the Home Ministry makes clear that this law has no bearing on sect law." "Meiji Religious Policy," 62.

northeast of Kyoto, the intended target of the Meiji edict, may be traced as far back as the ninth century. Scholars generally agree that Hieizan was the first mountain in Japan deemed off-limits to women for religious reasons, and trace the practice to ninth-century textual evidence. The 818 *Hachijō shiki* 八條式 (*Eight Regulations*), in the “Kansō tendai shū nenbun gakushō shiki” 勸獎天台宗年分學生式 (“Procedures for Training Tendai School Yearly Ordinands”), reports the following:

Two lay administrators will be appointed. They will take turns supervising the order, and also be responsible for prohibiting theft, liquor, and women. They will uphold the Buddha’s Dharma and protect the houses of the realm.<sup>31</sup>

差俗別當兩人 結番令加檢校 兼令不盜賊酒女等 住持佛法 守護國家

The significance of this text and women at Hieizan is anything but clear or settled. As Japanese Tendai scholar Paul Groner explains, Saichō requested that his monastery at Hieizan be designated a Mahayana temple to propagate Tendai Buddhist teachings and emphasize monastic discipline.<sup>32</sup> After the court granted him approval, Saichō began his work to establish the temple Hieizanji on Hieizan, which included fixing the mountain’s restricted zone (*kekai* 結界). Japanese scholars Sonoda Kōyū 蘭田香融 and Andō Toshio 安藤俊雄, along with Kageyama Haruki 景山春樹 trace this process in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century texts that reference another text said

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<sup>31</sup> *Dengyō Daishi zenshū* 傳教大師全集, 624c. The full text is also available online at <http://www.biwa.ne.jp/~namu007/txt/txd/017.htm> (accessed November 15, 2015).

<sup>32</sup> Paul Groner, *Saichō: The Establishment of the Japanese Tendai School* (Berkeley, CA: Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies, University of California at Berkeley, 1984).

to be written by Saichō himself.<sup>33</sup> The text attributed to Saichō explicates the mountain's boundaries as a four-kilometer square area marked by posts that "prohibited women, horses and oxen from entering."<sup>34</sup> Not only are the documents some five centuries removed from the establishment of Hieizan as a religious training site, however, Groner notes that they also call Hieizan by the name Enryakuji three years prior to it being named as such. Groner raises doubts on account of this that Saichō himself made the proposal at all, and suggests that Tendai monks in the Muromachi period 室町時代 (1338–1573) likely laid the boundaries to suit contemporary aims.<sup>35</sup>

Moving forward to the late nineteenth century, we know for certain that Hieizan's religious ban on women was being targeted for excision by the government. According to Washio, Shiga prefectural authorities demanded the mountain "do away

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<sup>33</sup> Sonoda Kōyū 蘭田香融 and Andō Toshio 安藤俊雄, "Saichō" 最澄 (*NST*), 503; Kageyama Haruki 景山春樹, *Hieizan* 比叡山 (Tokyo: Kadokawa shoten, 1966), 66.

<sup>34</sup> Kageyama, *Hieizan*, 67.

<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, Saichō submitted several petitions to the court during his efforts to reorganize and expand the temple complex at Hieizan, including plans for new halls and monks to oversee them. According to Groner, "Saichō heard very little or nothing concerning his petitions." *Saichō*, 131. These types of petitions were likely submitted to the court through the Office of Monastic Affairs (*sōgō* 僧綱), which was controlled by a Hossō monk, Gomyō 護命 (750–834) at that time, therefore they may never have reached the court at all, let alone the Emperor. Even if they had reached the court, Saichō's proposal to replace the precepts prescribed in the *Sifēnlǜ* 四分律 (Skt. *Dharmaguptaka-vinaya*, Jpn. *Shibunritsu*, *Four Part Precepts*) with those in the *Fànwǎng jīng* 梵網經 (Skt. *Brahmajāla Sūtra*, Jpn. *Bonmōkyō*, *Sūtra of Brahma's Net*) was rapidly becoming so controversial, Groner speculates, the court probably would not have wanted to become involved in administrative matters at Hieizan. Nothing seems to have come of Saichō's petitions, moreover, because according to the *Denjutsu isshinkaimon* 傳述一心戒文 (*Concerning the Essay on the One-Mind Precepts*, 833–834), Saichō pressed for their approval again seven months later. *Ibid.*, 17–18.

with this bigoted practice.”<sup>36</sup> Officials at the mountain, taken aback by such a request, countered in an official reply (*tōshin* 答申) that female exclusion traced back as far as an edict issued by Emperor Kammu 桓武天皇 (737–806) and more recently by Emperor Go Yōzei 後陽成天皇 (1571–1617). Despite apparent “misgivings over completely sweeping it away,” Shiga Prefecture then set in motion a conversation with central government authorities to abolish the mountain’s ban on women.<sup>37</sup> First, an appeal was sent to the Ministry of Finance (*Ōkurashō* 大蔵省) stating that climbing and sightseeing on the mountain should be open to all, with no regard to national origin or gender.

Following this, the Ministry of Finance sought an order from the Great Council of State on April 25:

Regarding female barriers on Hieizan, a petition has been received from Shiga Prefecture. Upon careful and deliberate consideration of the content of the appended document, even if female barriers are not related to the matter of foreigners ascending the mountain, there is no harm in people walking anywhere among the thousand high mountain crags. The reason this merits careful consideration and requires the exercise of governmental authority is that from the standpoint of modern civilization, a decisive reformation of prohibitions regarding sacred spaces (*kekai no gokinsei* 結界の御禁制) is appropriate for a new system of government. An order in accordance with the following

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<sup>36</sup> Washio and Jinki, “Nyonin kekai no haishi tenmatsu,” 230.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

shall be issued to Shiga Prefecture, therefore with the attached written judgment this communication is concluded.<sup>38</sup>

比叡山上女人結界ノ儀ニ付、滋賀県ヨリ伺出候別紙ノ條款深理  
蜜考致シ候處、女人結界等ノ儀ハ、假令外国人登山ノ一事ニ関  
セズトモ、千山高岳何處トシテ人間ノ跋涉ヲ害スル場所モ有之  
間敷、只重ンジ憚ル所以ハ国禁ノ然ラシムル所ニシテ、今日ノ  
文明上ヨリ論シ候ヘハ、結界ノ御禁制等ハ、断然改メラレ候方、  
更始ノ御政體に適當可仕候間左ノ通り滋賀県へ指令致シ度、因  
テ案書一同、比段相伺候也

On May 2, 1872, a Grand Council of State official (*shikan* 史官) sent an inquiry to the Ministry of Finance:

As to Shiga Prefecture's appended inquiry regarding the prohibition of women from Hieizan, the practice shall be abolished in accordance with the Ministry of Finance's wishes. The same shall apply to Kōyasan, Miyajima and all other such areas. Therefore, a general proclamation should be issued, and as a result of our investigation, a draft proclamation is appended with our reply.<sup>39</sup>

別紙滋賀縣伺、叡山女人結界ノ儀ハ御省見込ノ通り、被應候處、  
高野宮島、其外右様モ可有之依テ一般へ布告相成候筈ニ付、御  
取調ノ上、布告案相総申出有之度候也。

The Ministry of Finance responded the same day:

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 231.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

Regarding the prohibition of women on the areas of Hieizan within Shiga Prefecture, as far as abolishing the practice in accordance with [Shiga Prefecture's] inquiry, in addition there are more than a few other areas where prohibitions are practiced, such as Kōyasan.

We acknowledge Shiga Prefecture's request for a detailed study for a general draft proclamation.

Upon inquiring with the Ministry of Doctrinal Education regarding the findings below, the issuance of a general proclamation is appropriate. This concludes our reply.<sup>40</sup>

滋賀県部内比叡山女子結界ノ儀、伺ノ通被應候ニ付テハ尚高野山等ヲ始、其他結界ノ場所モ不少候間、一般ノ御布告案 可取調旨御申越ノ趣承知、則左ノ取調差進候條一應教部省へ御下問ノ上、一般ニ御布告相成可、然ト存候因テ及御答候也。

The Ministry of Doctrinal Instruction immediately replied:

The content of your inquiry regarding the practice of female barriers has been acknowledged. The Ministry of Doctrinal Instruction has no objection to your inquiry. This concludes our reply. The appended document shall be returned.<sup>41</sup>

女人結界廃止ノ儀ニ付御打合ノ趣、致ニ承知候。右於當省、異存無之候。仍テ此段及御答候也。

追テ別紙一通及御返却候也。

Finally, the Great Council of State issued an order to the Ministry of Finance:

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

Regarding your written inquiry on mountain climbing by women, it shall be permitted in accordance with your inquiry. Notification shall also be made to the Enryakuji temple.<sup>42</sup>

書面女人登山ノ儀、伺ノ上差許候條、延曆寺へモ心得、可申遠事。

With this, the Ministry of Finance issued an order to Shiga Prefecture, who in turn notified Enryakuji at the top of Hieizan.

#### Receiving the Edict (Kōyasan)

Kōyasan's religious ban on women, like the one at Ōminesan, is often traced back to the monastery's founder, Kūkai.<sup>43</sup> Female exclusion appears in the *Konjaku monogatari shū* 今昔物語集 (*Anthology of Tales from the Past*), a twelfth-century collection of fictional stories, although owing to the nature of the source it can only be used as a historical signpost insofar as it presents a popular understanding. The “Kōbō daishi shiken kōyasan go” 弘法大師始建高野山語 (“Tale of Kōbō Daishi [Kūkai] First Building Mount Kōya”), which states that “women have not climbed it for a long

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 231–232.

<sup>43</sup> See Mizuhara Gyōei 水原堯榮, *Nyonin kinsei to Kōyasan* 女人禁制と高野山 (Kōyasan: Kobori Nangakudō, 1928) for an early study that traces in broad strokes the narrative discourses feeding into Kōyasan and its history of female exclusion. Kōyasan historian Hinonishi Shinjō's 日野西眞定 more recent research from the 1990s considers female exclusion at the mountain in two short journal articles that address its significance in an array of dimensions (history, art history, folk studies, and pilgrimage) and. See Hinonishi, “Kōyasan no nyonin kinsei (jō)” 高野山の女人禁制 (上), *Setsuwa daigaku kenkyū* 説話大学研究 27 (1992): 13–23; and “Kōyasan no nyonin kinsei (ge)” 高野山の女人禁制 (下), *Setsuwa daigaku kenkyū* 説話大学研究 28 (1993): 12–23. Philip Nicoloff, *Sacred Kōyasan: A Pilgrimage to the Mountain Temple of Saint Kōbō Daishi and the Great Sun Buddha* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2008) can be consulted for general information in English.

time (*onna nagaku nobarazu* 女永く登らず).<sup>44</sup> Hōnen 法然 (1133-1212), the founder of Japan's Pure Land tradition of Buddhism, also discusses the exclusion of women from Kōyasan in his *Muryōjukyō shaku* 無量寿経釈 (*Commentary on the Larger Sakhavayi Sūtra*, 1190):

Mt. Koya is the peak enclosed by Kōbō daishi [Kūkai], and is the ground for the prosperity of the supreme vehicle of Shingon. Though one says that the moon of the 'Three Secrets' shines widely, it does not illuminate the gloom of the incapability of women, and though it is said that the 'water of wisdom in the five pitchers' flows equally, it is not poured on the dirt and defilement of women. At these places, they still have their impediments, how much even more in the Pure Land beyond Three Realms.<sup>45</sup>

Along with general references to Kōyasan's ban on women, stories of Kūkai's mother and her failed attempt to climb to the summit of the peak begin to appear by the Muromachi period. The story of a novice monk named Karukaya (*Karukaya dōshin* かるかや道心) tells of Kūkai's 83-year-old mother (described as a nun) traveling to Kōyasan to meet her son but being unable to pass beyond a particular

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<sup>44</sup> *NKBT*, 73. Hinonishi identifies a passage dated to 817 in the *Henjō hakki shōryōshū* 遍照發揮性靈集, a collection of poetry and prose attributed to Kūkai that was compiled by his disciple Shinzei 真濟 (800–860) as containing the first reference to boundaries at Kōyasan. The text makes no mention of gender, however, and there is doubt as to whether Kūkai himself wrote the document. "Kōyasan no nyonin kinzei (jō)," 13–14.

<sup>45</sup> Cited in Matsuo Kenji, "Official Monks and Reclusive Monks: Focusing on the Salvation of Women" *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 64, no. 3 (2001): 369–380, who draws from *NST* 10:55. Scholars like Nishiguchi Junko 西口順子 question whether this was written by Hōnen himself or by later generations of disciples. See Nishiguchi, *Onna no chikara – kodai no josei to Bukkyō* 女の力—古代の女性と仏教 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1987).

point.<sup>46</sup> Kūkai welcomed her passage, spreading his monastic robes over a stone so she could cross. When she tries, however, a single drop of menstrual blood falls, igniting the robe and causing a “rain of fire” to fall.<sup>47</sup> In a manner recalling En no Gyōja and his mother (and perhaps even forming the basis of that narrative), the Karukaya story notes that Kūkai’s mother was enshrined at a worship hall at the base of the mountain (present-day Jison’in 慈尊院).

Shifting from narrative to historical dimensions, we know that seven “women’s halls” (*nyonin dō* 女人堂) were established at entrances to Kōyasan, linked by a path called the “women’s trails” (*nyonin michi* 女人道). Today only traces

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<sup>46</sup> According to Japanese literature scholar Susan Matisoff, the story of Karukaya likely originated in groups of wandering holy men (*hijiri* 聖) who combined Pure Land and Shingon teachings. See “Barred from Paradise? Mount Kōya and the Karukaya Legend,” in *Engendering Faith: Women and Buddhism in Premodern Japan*, edited by Barbara Ruch, 463–500 (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Center for Japanese Studies, 2002). This particular story may trace back to as early as the twelfth century, and was recorded in later collections of similar tales, including the *Sekkyō bushi* 説経節 (ca. 1639) and the *Sekkyō shū* 説経集 (early Tokugawa). Karukaya reached such popularity that Matisoff declares it was “all but universally familiar” through the 1930s. “Barred from Paradise,” 463.

<sup>47</sup> The role of mothers and motherhood has a long provenance in the Buddhist tradition. Monks upheld the duty to seek salvation for their mothers, and the mothers of monks would often, in their older years, be called to live close to the temple. Records from the tenth century, for example, tell of monks at Hieizan temporarily suspending their training to go down the mountain and visit their mothers. If monks were unable to suspend training, they could practice filiality by providing establishments for their mothers at the base of mountains. Women’s halls were established as well, often at places marked with a stone that separated the pure mountain realm (male) from the impure valley (female). In the case of Kūkai’s mother (and En no Gyōja, although he was not an officially ordained monk), monks could meet their mothers here. Female relatives and other women also congregated here, ostensibly to worship Kōyasan from afar and, as Katsuura notes, perform tasks such as washing the robes of the monks. See Katsuura, *Kodai, chūsei no josei to Bukkyō* 古代・中世の女性と仏教 (Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 2003), esp. 46–49.

remain, but in the past women could lodge at these sights and pay respects from afar to the main temples and the Inner Precinct, which housed Kūkai’s mausoleum.<sup>48</sup>

According to Jinki Hōjū’s 1933 report on “Abolishing Women’s Boundaries” introduced at the beginning of the chapter, a group of curious men was severely punished on April 29, 1828 by the government office (*yakusho* 役所) responsible for the mountain for holding a drinking party alongside the women’s trail to enjoy the view of women passing by and make loud and crude remarks to them. Women were officially prohibited from Kōyasan’s central temples until 1872, yet Jinki and Hinonishi claim there are many accounts of temple monks violating the precepts against sexual relationships with women and being banished from the mountain, and even a Tokugawa-period record of the shogun issuing orders prohibiting the sale of women’s clothing on Kōyasan.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> As noted in Jinki (Washio and Jinki, “Nyonin kekkai no haishi tenmatsu,” 232), *Kōyasan meisho zue* 高野山名所図会 (*Illustrated Famous Sites of Kōyasan*) includes illustrations of women at the Rokurotōge 轆轤峠 peak along the women’s trail sticking their necks out to gaze at the temple complex below, accompanied by a humorous verse (*kyōka* 狂歌):

Ghastly women atop Rokurotōge  
Sticking out their necks  
And revering the temple below!  
*Bakemono no*            化けものの  
*Rokurotōge ni*        轆轤峠に  
*ounatachi*            おうなたち  
*kubi sashinobete*    首さしのべて  
*ogamu danjō*        拝む壇場

<sup>49</sup> Jinki additionally notes that a Kōyasan head priest during the Edo period set up women as “temple attendants” (*terakoshō* 寺小性), dressed them in elegant garments with long sleeves of crepe (*chirimen nagasode* 縮緬長袖), and made them appear like handsome young boys with long front bangs. Since this was done when homosexuality (*nanshoku* 男色) among the monks was at its peak, and as a result attendants were dressed like women, this may account for women’s clothing being sold (Washio and Jinki, “Nyonin kekkai no haishi tenmatsu,” 233).

Meiji policies regarding religion brought similarly sweeping changes to Kōyasan.<sup>50</sup> Edict 98 shocked the men at Kōyasan, “like a thunderbolt on a clear day.”<sup>51</sup> Responding to it, mountain elders rallied the monks and signed a blood pledge reaffirming the boundary against women, and submitted it to the government.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, a group of thirty young monks swore an oath and exchanged bowls filled with water before Niu Myōjin 丹生明神, the female guardian deity (*ubusunagami* 産土神) of Kōyasan.<sup>53</sup> They descended the mountain en masse rioting in hopes of pleading their case directly to the imperial court. Kōyasan was “awash with tumult, like a boiling cauldron.”<sup>54</sup>

The imperial court supposedly issued an unofficial opinion (*naii* 内意) stating that an exception should be made for Kōyasan regarding Edict 98. The tax collector

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<sup>50</sup> In 1869, for example, the headquarters temple of custodial monks at Kōyasan, Seiganji 青巖寺, was forced to merge with the temple of scholar monks, Kozanji 興山寺, to form the single headquarters of Kongōbuji 金剛峯寺. The Meiji government seized most of Kōyasan’s land holdings in 1872, moreover, except some three thousand hectares (approximately 7,410 acres), and forced mountain residents to identify themselves either as a member of a religious order or as a layperson. Nicoloff describes custodial monks (*gyōnin* 行人) as the “worker bees” of the mountain who, as opposed to scholarly clerics, did not conduct esoteric rituals but rather performed a range of custodial duties at the mountain, as the term implies. They “prepared meals, maintained the halls, acquired supplies, collected taxes, trained the militia...[and] also carried out the more routine religious duties, such as placing offerings of incense, food, flowers, and votive lights before the deities.” Despite performing different roles, a bitter rivalry between custodial and scholarly monks developed at Kōyasan from around the twelfth century, which led to the establishment of separate temple organizations. Nicoloff, *Sacred Kōyasan*, 90.

<sup>51</sup> Washio and Jinki, “Nyonin kekkai no haishi tenmatsu,” 233.

<sup>52</sup> They additionally petitioned the abbots (*monshu* 門主) of Daikakuji 大覚寺 and Ninnaji 仁和寺 in Kyoto, seeking “influential princely families” (*miyake* 宮家) and groups of senior government officials (*daikanren* 大官連) to act on their behalf. Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Jinki notes that here they were mimicking an old incident involving a temple land dispute with Yoshinoyama during the Kamakura period.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

for Sakai Prefecture who acted as the regional governmental inspectorate, however, staunchly supported expanding women's rights and supported the edict's implementation. The man quietly snuck his wife into the temple complex at night and took her to the Gobyōbashi 御廟橋, a bridge leading to Kūkai's mausoleum. The incident, Jinki explains, caused great uproar at the mountain.

In 1880, men at the mountain passed a resolution allowing women access during the day and calling for the construction of separate lodging facilities if they needed to spend the night. Some stipulations from the nine-article resolution include, in no particular order:

Should it be revealed after the fact that someone did not send a female worshipper to their designated lodgings at sunset and secretly allowed her to remain on the mountain, deliberations shall be held by the council members and subject to regulations of the Shingon sect.

日暮登山せし女人を参籠所へ送らず、潜かに院内に止宿せしめ、後日發露せば議員商量し、本宗成法に充つること。

Even women with legitimate reasons for being on the mountain shall be strictly prohibited from wandering around at night.

無據縁故ありて登嶂せし女人と雖も夜中徘徊堅く禁止のこと。

Even persons operating vending stalls in tenement structures owned by the temple administration and those who make a living at the lodgings on the mountain shall as a matter of course be strictly prohibited from allowing their wives and daughters, and all other women, even a relative, to reside with them, as well as consume meat. Anyone who does not abide by these

terms shall be immediately expelled from the mountain.<sup>55</sup>

寺院所持の長屋に於いて出店業者、及びに山内に存在する旅籠屋渡世の者たのとも、妻女と寄留せしむるは勿論、假令親戚の者たりとも、都て女人の宿泊且つ噉肉等嚴禁、若し格守せざるものは遠に放逐すべきこと。

By 1888, women—friends or family, lay or ordained—were permitted to spend one night on the mountain either in one of the temples or in a private home and children seven years of age or younger, regardless of gender, would not be allowed to reside on the mountain. The mountain elders selected overseers and even special-duty police officers (*seigan junsu* 請願巡查) charged with enforcing these regulations on the mountain, day and night. The regulations were maintained until 1887, but Jinki notes that over time they were no longer strictly observed.

For a woman to spend the night at Kōyasan at that time, a report needed to be filed with the Honzan Kyōgisho 本山教議所, the name of the Shingon Sect Office (*shūmusho* 宗務所) at the time, and the woman then faced questioning by the special-duty police officer. If she stayed on the mountain for two or more days, every morning she had to check in at the women's hall and file another report.

Like the wives secretly residing in private homes, many of these women lived in closets, and every day straw slippers would be left out for them in front of the shops in case they were needed. At Kūkai's 1,050th Death Anniversary memorial in 1884, women blended in among the throngs of worshippers, inciting a large riot. As reported by local elders, lay officials armed with a tool (*kotoji* コトジ) shooed the

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 234.

women away. Several women did not immediately leave, and men lopped off their hair and terrorized them.

By around 1890, women wishing to stay for two or more nights could submit written notice stating, for example, “In accordance with temple regulations, although I ought to descend the mountain after a one night’s stay, I am unable to walk due to foot pain and wish to remain another night” 山規通り一泊にて下山可致之處、足痛にて歩行設致し兼ね、今一泊通夜仕度.<sup>56</sup> The head priest at the temple lodging would then grant permission and confirm the state of affairs with a written notice.

Jinki spoke with the first woman purported to live at Kōyasan permanently. Her name was Sugano Ichino 菅野いちの, and at the time of the interview she was seventy-five years old and proprietor of a miso shop. Sugano joined her husband at Kōyasan when she was twenty-one, and that that time there existed more than two hundred temples and fifty shops. Sugano was forced to perform the foregoing procedures for women’s lodging, but recalled that by the mid-1880s the number of women secretly living on the mountain increased.<sup>57</sup> Once Sugano mounted a horse and strutted around the mountain in defiance of the tedious regulations for women. She quarreled in front of the Ryūkō’in 龍光院 temple with the superintendent (*kanchō* 管長) at the time, before entering the main precincts (*danjō garan* 壇上伽藍) and paying her respects at various temples.

On May 19, 1901, Prince Jishō 慈性新王 (Prince Komatsu no Miya Akihito 小松宮彰仁親王殿下, 1846–1903), former abbot (*monshu* 門主) of Ninnaji, became

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 235.

<sup>57</sup> Sugano also noted that people also began to consume fish in secret around the same time—small fish (*zako* 雑魚) were called “nails” (*orikugi* 折釘) and “shredded bonito” (*katsuobushi* 鰹節) was called “recycled paper” (*kenshi* 券紙).

the secretary-general (*sōsai* 総裁) of the Kōyasan Kōryūkai 高野山興隆会. He issued a royal decree (*reishi*, *ryōji* 令旨) regarding the presence of women on the mountain, which the monks received with broad acquiescence. When the Russo-Japanese War broke out in 1904, many merchant families on the mountain sent their sons to war and entire rows of businesses were forced to close. Responding to this, Senior Bishop Mitsumon Yūhan 密門宥範, the head abbot (*zasu* 座主) of the Kongōbuji temple, issued a special temple directive in 1906 officially allowing women to live on the mountain more than thirty years after Edict 98 was promulgated.

## Conclusions

The 1970 reconfiguration of the bounded realm did not generate a backlash or provoke controversy even when the Mother's Hall boundary line was moved, fracturing the central narrative practice of forbidding women from passing beyond that site. The 1872 edict was quickly implemented at Hieizan and many others places but blocked at Kōyasan for more than thirty years and never successful at Ōminesan. One might assume that controversies existed previously at all three of these sites, and elsewhere. In part because of the shock that seemed to register at Kōyasan, however, and more importantly the lack of other citable evidence, I consider 1872 as the beginning of the modern narrative of female exclusion.

This chapter's *in situ* analysis of Hieizan, the intended target of the legislation, and Kōyasan, where its proposals met with stiff and enduring opposition, brings female exclusion into clearer historical relief, but we have yet to obtain a clear picture of the situation at Ōminesan. The next chapter seeks to fill in more of Ōminesan's historical contours by exploring two modern cultural developments—the 1936 National Park Designation and the 2004 UNESCO World Heritage site selection—

and the rise of discourse (and discontent) concerning the mountain's ban on women in the twentieth century.

## Chapter Three:

### Behind the Official Line

The Peak of Gold (Kinpusen) lies 500 *ri* south of Japan's capital.

Bodhisattva Kongō Zaō [resides] at the summit. It is the supreme other world. There are pines, cypresses, famed flowers, and strange plants. At several hundred shrines and temples small and large dwell those practicing the Great Way. Women cannot climb it. At present, men afire with the yearning to go up there must abandon alcohol, meat, and sex for three months; then all their hearts desire will be fulfilled. It is said that the [mountain's] bodhisattva is the transformation body of Maitreya, like Mañjuśrī at Wutaishan.<sup>1</sup>

*Mata iwaku. Hongoku Miyakonojō no minami gohyaku yo ri ni kinpusen ari. Chōjō ni kongōzaō bosatsu ari. Dai ichi no reii nari. Yama ni matsu hinoki meika nansō ari. Daishō no tera sū hyaku, bushi-yuki takamichi no sha kore ni kyosu. Katsute nyonin arite agaru koto wo ezu. Ima ni itarite danshi aganto yoku sureba, sangetsu shunikuyokushiki wo dantsu.*

*Motomuru tokoro mina togu. Iwaku, bosatsu wa kore miroku no keshin, godai no monju no gotoshi.*

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<sup>1</sup> *Yìchǔ liùtiē* 義楚六帖 (Jpn. *Giso rokujō*; ca. 954), also known as *Shìshì liùtiē* 釋氏六帖 (Jpn. *Shakushi rokujō*), (Kyoto: Hōyū Shoten, 1979), vol. 2, 459. Kinpusen refers to Ōminesan. This text is widely cited in Japanese and Western scholarship on Ōminesan and regarded in popular perceptions as the earliest substantiation of female exclusion at the mountain. Some raise doubts over its historicity, however. Kyōtani, head of the Tenkawa Research Association, however, believes that much of the text is exaggerated, if not fabricated. He questions why so much of the text discusses Ōminesan, and finds it hard to believe that a Chinese monk actually came to Ōminesan at that time. For Kyōtani and others, the *Giso rokujō* as a product of later generations. The Chinese original can be referenced in *Shìshì liùtiē* 釋氏六帖 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe, 1990).

又云ワク。本國都城ノ南五百余里ニ金峯山有リ。頂上ニ金剛藏王菩薩有リ。第一ノ靈異ナリ。山ニ松桧名花軟草有リ。大小ノ寺數百、節行高道ノ者コレニ居ス。曾テ女人有リテ上ルコトヲ得ズ。今ニ至リテ男子上ント欲スレバ、三月酒肉欲色ヲ断ツ。求ムル所皆遂グ。云ワク、菩薩ハ是レ弥勒ノ化身、五台ノ文殊ノ如シ。

The *Yichū liùtiē* 義楚六帖, a tenth-century Chinese text that preserves the travel records of the monk Yichū 義楚 (907–960) in Japan, is all but universally familiar in Yoshino and Dorogawa today (henceforth, I will cite the Chinese text by the Japanese pronunciation of its name since that is how people in Japan recognize it). The passage cited above, raised often in conversation in Dorogawa and also appearing in local literature on Ōminesan, uses this history as a font of legitimacy to celebrate and preserve the mountain’s exceptional uniqueness, both topographic and cultural. The *Giso rokujō* reflects the enduring power of cultural memory and imagination at the mountain—in other words, its “affective landscape.”<sup>2</sup> Ōminesan’s affective landscape, in general, and its tradition of female exclusion, in particular, is often considered static and unchanging, but this chapter draws attention to its dynamic and malleable dimensions. On two occasions in the twentieth century, the vision of Ōminesan was reimagined: first in 1936, when the entire Ōminesan range was designated a National Park, and then in 2004 with its inclusion as part of the “Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage

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<sup>2</sup> I borrow from Blair the term “affective landscape,” the focus of her second chapter in a study, *Real and Imagined*. Blair conceptualizes affective landscape in the vein of cultural historian Jan Assman, whose works on religion and cultural memory emphasizes its social and cultural dimensions. According to Assman, cultural memory denotes a group’s shared body of knowledge, transmitted and elaborated over generations. Religion bestows an “ultimately validating framework of meaning,” while memory serves to “establish connections and constitute identity,” and Assman views the two as synonymous and simultaneous. Assman, *Religion and Cultural Memory: Ten Studies*, translated by Rodney Livingstone (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), esp. 31–32.

Routes in the Kii Mountain Range” UNESCO World Heritage Site. Whereas the tenth-century *Giso rokujō* account features the religious tradition of female exclusion, these modern imaginings avoid any mention of it in the official line, or “façade” (*tatemaie* 建前), that promotes Ōminesan as an exceptional physical and cultural landscape. This chapter draws attention to the carefully constructed nature of these frontages and the agendas and agents responsible for them; it also highlights the often-overlooked fact that female exclusion stood as a matter of central concern and contestation behind the official line.

#### Yoshino–Kumano National Park

Except for an 1872 Meiji edict, a vague claim to “religious rule” in 1878, and scattered hearsay accounts, we know very little about female exclusion at Ōminesan well into the twentieth century. We first hear of people contesting the ban in 1926, when the *Ōsaka Asahi Shinbun* reported on July 3 about a group of young men and women gathering in Dorogawa to debate it

Women too are fine people. It is absurd to shackle only women’s freedom to climb, regardless of man and woman’s relative nature in particular. A great plan is emerging in Dorogawa: ‘Please lift the ban in order to attract mountain climbing guests.’ There seems to be agreement, thus the nearly thousand and some hundred years prospect will likely be unraveled.<sup>3</sup>

*Onna mo rippana ningen de aru, koto ni otoko to onna towa sōtaisei de aru ni mo kakarawazu josei nomi tozan no jiyū o sokubaku suru wa fugōri de aru yoroshiku kaikin shite tozan kyaku o kyūshū subeku sore ga*

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<sup>3</sup> *Ōsaka Asahi shinbun* 大阪朝日新聞, July 3, 1926.

*Dorogawa hatten no saidai ryōsaku de aru to iu fū ni itchi shita sō de aru  
kara, sen sū hyaku nenrai no chikaki shōrai niwa tokareru de arou*

女も立派な人間である、ことに男と女とは相対性であるにもかから  
わず女性のみ登山の自由を束縛するのは不合理であるよろしく解禁し  
て登山客を吸収すべくそれが洞川発展の最大良策であるというふう  
に一致したそうであるから、千数百年来の近き将来には解かれるで  
あろう。

The article was signed, “‘Ms. Mountaintop,’ a woman who can also climb  
(“*Nyonin mo noboreru ‘Yamagami san’*” 女も登れる「山上さん」). The meeting  
was rumored to have been prompted by two female teachers, dressed in male garb,  
who attempted to climb Sanjōgatake but were blocked at the Dorogawa trailhead.  
Speculation aside, the article clearly demonstrates that Dorogawa residents were  
concerned about local economics by the mid-1920s, and furthermore that a number of  
them sought to repeal the policy of female exclusion. We can better understand the  
events of 1926 by stepping back and considering a contemporaneous development  
impacting Dorogawa and the greater Ōminesan region: the campaign to make  
Ōminesan a National Park.

#### Preservation and Politics

Yoshino–Kumano National Park, a roughly six-hundred-square-kilometer area  
spanning three prefectures and including the entire Ōminesan range, was established  
on February 1, 1936.<sup>4</sup> As geologist Wakimizu Tetsugorō 脇水鐵五郎 (1867–1942)

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<sup>4</sup> On December 4, 1934, five National Parks were approved: Akan 阿寒, Aso Kujū 阿蘇くじゅう, Chūbu Sangaku 中部山岳, Mount Daisetsu (Daisetsuzan 大雪山), and Nikkō 日光. The second round, announced on March 16, 1934, included Kirishima

described a month later in the newly inaugurated journal *Kokuritsu kōen* (國立公園, *The National Parks*), Yoshino–Kumano National Park was the only site to offer both seascapes and mountain scenery as well as feature aqueous rock mountain formations.<sup>5</sup> Exceptional natural scenery did not compel the designation alone, however. The cultural landscape overlaying Ōminesan’s physical features also propelled its success.

Yoshino–Kumano National Park is important to this study for two reasons. First, the National Park designation sparked major debate about women’s prohibition from Sanjōgatake. According to current Ryūsenji head priest Okada Echio, this specific moment marked the end of female exclusion as a “debate” (*giron* 議論) and the beginning of female exclusion as an “issue” (*mondai* 問題, also “problem”).<sup>6</sup> Second, female exclusion is, paradoxically, excluded from the official line. Yoshino–Kumano National Park represents a selective vision of the land and its histories. Its construction depended in part upon the official omission of female exclusion and other matters such as private land ownership and industry interests not in alignment with the overall vision of the National Park system.

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Kinkō Bay 霧島錦江湾, Seto Inland Sea 瀬戸内海, and Unzen Amakusa 雲仙天草. And on February 2, 1936, four other sites received designations: Daisen-Oki 大山隠岐, Fuji–Hakone–Izu 富士箱根伊豆, Towada-Hachimantai 十和田八幡平, and Yoshino–Kumano 吉野熊野. More information on each site is available at <http://www.env.go.jp/park/parks/index.html> (accessed October 24, 2015). Also of note, in 1965 Dorogawa residents spearheaded a movement to expand the boundaries of Yoshino–Kumano National Park extended to include the town. In addition to its placement amidst a thousand meters of natural Yoshino cedar, Dorogawa formed the base for Sanjōgatake, Inamuragatake, and several other peaks in the Ōmine range. It also extended to two large limestone caves (Goyomatsu shōnyūdō 五代松鍾乳洞, Menfudō shōnyūdō 面不動鍾乳洞).

<sup>5</sup> Wakimizu Tetsugorō 脇水鐵五郎, "Yoshino Kumano kokuritsu kōen" 吉野熊野國立公園, *Kokuritsu kōen* 國立公園 8, no. 3 (March 1936): 26–33.

<sup>6</sup> Okada, interview.

The story of Yoshino–Kumano National Park is a long and winding narrative about land preservation and politics. It begins in neither Yoshino nor Kumano, however, but in Ōdaigahara 大台ヶ原, a plateau in Mie 三重 Prefecture to the southeast of Ōminesan (Figure 3.1).<sup>7</sup> Ōdaigahara was first identified as a potential National Park candidate in 1923 on account of its primeval forests, which had remained largely untouched during Japan’s industrial boom, difficult to access and removed from direct river access.<sup>8</sup>

When Tamura Tsuyoshi 田村剛 (1890–1979), a highly regarded landscape architect who led the selection and establishment of Japan’s first National Parks, proposed a list of sites in February 1921, however, Ōdaigahara was not among them. Ōdaigahara was nominated two years later by Yokoyama Sukenari 横山助成 (1884–1963), head of the Ministry of Home Affairs Bureau of Hygiene (*Naimushō eiseikyoku* 内務省衛生局). Yokoyama, in turn, had been encouraged by botanist Shirai Mitsutaro 白井光太郎 (1863–1962), who had been conducting surveys and writing about Ōdaigahara- and Yoshino-area mountains since 1895, as well as a

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<sup>7</sup> Murakushi Nisaburō 村串仁三郎, *Kokuritsu kōen seiritsushi no kenkyū kaihatsu to shizen hogo no kakushitsu o chūshin ni* 国立公園成立史の研究 開発と自然保護の確執を中心に (Tokyo: Hōsei Daigaku Shuppanyoku, 2005), available at <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=233675> (accessed October 28, 2015). Murakushi’s comprehensive study, the first to draw together research on the history of the Yoshino–Kumano National Park, serves as my main guide here.

<sup>8</sup> From the Edo period, most of Japan’s forests had been periodically thinned and reforested, at intervals of twenty and one hundred years, in order to provide fresh supplies of lumber. See Conrad D. Totman, *The Green Archipelago: Forestry in Preindustrial Japan* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1989) for a compelling study of conservation in premodern Japan.

collective of local associations and preservation groups based primarily in Yoshino.<sup>9</sup> They submitted petitions to the Ministry of Home Affairs, pointing out the exceptional features of both the natural landscapes and historic sites of the area.<sup>10</sup> The appeals further stressed that Ōdaigahara and Yoshino were in close proximity to Kyoto and Osaka and would therefore serve as desirable tourist destinations.

By the early 1910s, around two hundred climbers per year visited Ōdaigahara, but after it was mentioned in the *Osaka Asahi Shinbun* newspaper as a nearby mountain to visit, the number of visitors sharply increased to more than one thousand during the 1914–1915 season.<sup>11</sup> That same year, Shirai was invited to Tōnan'in in Yoshinoyama by the local preservation society for a lecture series. At the event, which was well attended by the media, Shirai stressed the necessity of nature conservation. Over the next several years Shirai published a series of articles and bulletins on Ōdaigahara and Yoshino preservation, and was joined in these endeavors by Kishida Hideo 岸田日出雄, an industrial engineer for the Yoshino District

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<sup>9</sup> As logging efforts penetrated ever deeper into the mountains throughout the Meiji period, local people in the general southern Kinki region began taking protective countermeasures from the 1880s. Many of these began in Yoshino. Yoshinoyama Park (*Yoshinoyama kōen* 吉野山公園) was established in 1893, for instance, in order to safeguard its famous cherry blossoms and historic sites. The preservation society Yoshino Hoshōkai 吉野山保勝会 emerged at the same time, led by the district headman. They collected donations from members to restore damaged forests. The Yoshino Hoshōkai remains active today, and the group maintains an online presence at <http://www.hoshokai.yoshino.jp/> (accessed October 28, 2015).

<sup>10</sup> One example in the larger Yoshino area was Okutoro 奥漕, a river canyon straddling Mie, Nara, and Wakayama Prefectures that received designation as a Natural Monument (*Tennen kinenbutsu* 天然記念物) in 1928.

<sup>11</sup> Shirai Mitsutarō 白井光太郎, "Meizan Ōdaigaharayama no hogo" 名山大台原山の保護, in *Shirai Mitsutarō chosakushū* 白井光太郎著作集, by Shirai Mitsutarō and Kimura Yōjirō 木村陽二郎 (Tokyo: Kagaku Shoin, 1985), 245–255.

government and one of the first writers to cover female exclusion at Ōminesan in the 1930s (I follow his 1933 writing closely in the next section).<sup>12</sup>

When the National Park inspectorate, led by Tamura, visited Ōdaigahara in 1922, the Wakayama 和歌山 prefectural governor encouraged them to survey Kōyasan in the north and Hongū 本宮 and Nachi 那智 in the south and designate “one great National Park” (*ichidai kokuritsu kōen* 一大国立公園). Tamura and his party agreed.<sup>13</sup> Further, while discussions were being held Tokyo concerning the restructuring of National Park candidates, local leaders in Yoshino District formed the Yoshino National Park Realization Club (*Yoshino kokuritsu kōen kisei kai* 吉野国立公園期成会) on November 12, 1927.<sup>14</sup> The group announced their formation to the Ministry of Home Affairs and Tamura on December 7, 1927, and then sent a revised proposal for a National Park that included Ōdaigahara but focused also on the Ōminesan range. The proposal was submitted to the Imperial Diet in April of the following year (April 27, 1928), where it was favorably received, although Tamura noted an abundance of privately owned forests. Kishida had already been seeking to add the Kumano area, and now pressed local communities to further their

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<sup>12</sup> Kishida served as vice president for the journal *Sangaku* 山嶽, founded in October 1922 concomitant with the establishment of the Yamato Mountaineering Association (*Yamato tozangaku kai* 大和登山岳会, later shortened to *Yamato sangaku kai* 大和山岳会), led by Kimoto Genkichi 木本源吉 who had served as mayor of Nara City from 1908–1911. Suzuki Ryō 鈴木良, *Nara ken no hyaku nen* 奈良県の百年 (Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 1985), 227.

<sup>13</sup> Murakushi notes that this report may not be entirely factual but in any case around this time conservation efforts in Wakayama Prefecture also began to emerge (e.g. the 1926 founding of the Kumano Preservation Club [*Kumano hoshōkai* 熊野保勝会]).

<sup>14</sup> The Yoshino National Park Realization Club was led by Iwamoto Busuke 岩本武助, vice president of the Yamato Mountaineering Club who also served as a member of the House of Representatives, Sakata Shizuo 坂田静夫, section chief of Nara Prefecture Parks (*Naraken kōen kachō* 奈良県公園課長), and Kishida.

conservation efforts. On March 21, 1930, Kishida sent an official proposal for the three-prefecture National Park to Tamura.

The Ministry for Transportation and Communication (*Teishinshō* 逓信省), however, had already approved plans in 1929 for a hydroelectric plant in the upper reaches of the Kitayama River 北山川 in Kumano. Despite the potentially destructive effects on the landscape and scenery, within proposed National Park lands no less, contemporaneous articles in *Kokuritsu kōen* and by Tamura himself (who Murakushi claims certainly knew of the plans) avoid the issue altogether. Kishida repeatedly inquired with Tamura and the Ministry of Home Affairs to consider the Kitayama issue and stop plans for the dam, but nothing seems to have come of them. From 1931, moreover, loggers in the Yoshino area began contesting the National Park proposal, claiming development rights on their privately owned lands. As debate raged over these two issues (the Kitayama River hydroelectric power plant and logging), the National Parks Law passed the Diet in April 1931.

The National Park Committee (*Kokuritsu kōen iinkai* 國立公園委員会) first surveyed Yoshino and Kumano in 1931 over the course of four days in October and four days in November. The October team included politician Fujimura Yoshirō 藤村義朗 and a businessman, Takaku Jinnosuke 高久甚之助 (d. 1953), a key coordinator for Japanese travel company JTB who represented national tourism interests. The November team consisted of Tamura and forestry scholar Wakimizu Tetsutarō 脇水鐵太郎. A second round of surveys were held the following spring in April 1932, this time comprising Fujimura, politician Okabe Nagakage 岡部長景 (1884–1970), arts administrator Masaki Naohiko 正木直彦 (1862–1940), forestry scholar Honda

Seiroku 本多静六 (1866–1952), and economist Sahara Kenji 佐原憲次. Wakimizu conducted an additional round of surveys in August 1932.

The inspectorate, Tamura in particular, expressed misgivings over the ongoing industry disputes, but in July 1932 he affirmed the scope of the proposed site and its new name, Yoshino–Kumano National Park.<sup>15</sup> In terms of public and private lands, Tamura, in consultation with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (*Nōrinshō* 農林省), reduced the proportion of privately owned lands from seventy percent (48,024 *ha*) to just under sixty-percent (37,703 *ha*) between 1932 and 1936. This was made possible by maneuvering the boundary lines for the park around Kitayama for the hydroelectric plant and logging sites in all three prefectures (reference Figure 3.1). This clever strategy assuaged not only Nagoya’s Nankai Hydroelectric Company (*Nankai suiden kaisha* 南海水電会社) and logging companies wishing to develop previously owned lands but also activists who claimed that National Park lands should not be subject to development.<sup>16</sup>

The creation of Yoshino–Kumano National Park is a story of individuals and groups (local, regional, and national) engaging in ongoing negotiations, at times contentious, over the management and meaning of lands. The final product, a single National Park, is in reality the culmination of years of lengthy negotiations and calculated maneuverings carried out in the name of promoting and protecting a diverse range of interests. In the process, selective parts of history were preserved and

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<sup>15</sup> A navy base planned in 1935 on the Kumano coast within parklands also became a subject of debate but in the end did not affect the decision.

<sup>16</sup> Murakushi, *Kokuritsu kōen seiritsushi no kenkyū*, 245–255. The hydroelectric power plant never materialized, cast aside as government expenditures were increasingly directed toward war efforts.

upheld while others were simply bypassed (quite literally in this case). We see a similar process in the handling of female exclusion.

### Perspectives on Female Exclusion

In the years leading up to the 1936 designation, Ōminesan attracted nation-wide attention not only for its impending National Park status, but also for its religious tradition banning women's access. Journal articles from the early 1930s provide us with a relatively clear view of contemporary perspectives on Ōminesan's prohibition of women, which I summarize here. In 1936, Miyagi Shinga 宮城信雅 of Shōgo'in published "Ōminesan kankeisha narabini shugendō, shinkō tozansha ni yōbō su" 大峯山関係者並びに修験道、信仰登山者に要望す ("Ōminesan affiliates and Shugendō, demands on religious climbers") in *Shugen* 修験, journal of the Honzan lineage of Shugendō.<sup>17</sup> Miyagi also distributed a pamphlet outlining the two major sides of the debate.<sup>18</sup> In 1933, Kishida Hideo, who I introduced above as a leading

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<sup>17</sup> Miyagi Shinga 宮城信雅, "Ōminesan kankeisha narabini shugendō, shinkō tozansha ni yōbō su" 大峯山関係者並びに修験道、信仰登山者に要望す, *Shugen* 修験 7, no. 78 (1936): 2–6.

<sup>18</sup> Miyagi mentions three other sources I have been unable to locate. Matsumoto Bunzaburō 松本文三郎, an Indian and Chinese Buddhism and Buddhist Art History scholar from Tokyo University (then called the Imperial University [*Teikoku daigaku* 帝国大学]), published an article in the *Ōsaka Asahi shinbun* debating the issue from the perspective of Mahayana Buddhism. Matsumoto argued that gender discrimination was not inherent to Buddhism but female exclusion should be upheld as an ancient custom that Ōminesan alone currently maintained and should continue to uphold for future generations. Nagai Hyōsai 永井瓢齋, who had been employed by the *Ōsaka Asahi shinbun*, and Ōmiwa Shinsai 大三輪信哉 outlined the pro-opening argument in *Chūgain nippō* 中外日報, a specialty culture and religion newspaper, from the perspective of gender equality. Finally, a stern argument for women's prohibition demanding respect for devotees appeared also in *Chūgai nippō*, written under the pseudonym "Ōminesanroku setsuzan" 大峯山麓雪山 ("Ōminesan foot of the snowy mountain"). Miyagi, "Ōminesan kankeisha," 2.

figure in the campaign to secure Ōminesan's place as a National Park, reported on female exclusion in *Shugen* and *Kokuritsu kōen* 國立公園 (the same article printed twice).<sup>19</sup> In order to reconstruct the journalistic milieu of the 1930s and shed light on contemporary views of female exclusion, I offer close readings of Miyagi and Kishida here.

Miyagi represents the official line of Shōgo'in, one of the three head Shugendō temples (the other two being Daigoji and Kinpusenji) in the 1930s. It can be summarized in four points. First, stripping the mountain of its defining characteristic—a 1200-year-old religious tradition of male-only access—will destroy its sacredness.<sup>20</sup> Second, temple authorities sought to enforce “peak entering training” (*nyūbu shugyō* 入峯修行) for Ōmine devotees, promoting religious practice at the mountain rather than encouraging sport climbing, especially among young men. Related to this is the notion of pre-pilgrimage religious abstinence (*shōjin kessai* 精進潔齋) detailed in the tenth-century *Giso rokujō* and other premodern texts, including the *Genji monogatari* 源氏物語 (*Tale of Genji*, eleventh century). Miyagi makes specific mention in this capacity to the lay climbing guilds, many of whom he claimed had lost sight of its significance. Guides and youth student groups should also be well versed in matters of training—for example, chanting the *Heart Sūtra* (Skt.

*Prajñāpāramitāhṛdaya*, Jpn. *Hannya shingyō* 般若心教) facing east every morning

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<sup>19</sup> “Ōminesan myaku nyonin tozan kaikin mondai ni tsuite” 大峯山脈女人登山解禁問題について (“On the matter of women being released from the prohibition to climb Ōminesan”), *Shugen* 修験 59 (1933): 2–17; and *Kokuritsu kōen* 國立公園, vol. V, no. 3 (March 1933): 25–29. In 1936, Kishida published an additional report, “Ōminesanjō no nyonin kinsei ni tsuite” 大峯山上の女人禁制に就て (“On Women's Prohibitions from Ōmine Mountaintop”), *Shugen* 修験 77 (March 1936): 2–11.

<sup>20</sup> Ōminesan's female exclusion has since become regarded as 1300-year-old tradition.

and bowing to the emperor, and praying before eating—in order to maintain the mountain’s sacredness. Third, devotees are also customers in Yoshino and Dorogawa. Miyagi lamented that many Dorogawa residents focused merely on profit and commercialization, charging obscene “pillow charges” when they should cater to the devotees.

Finally, Miyagi claimed that female exclusion should not be considered in terms of male dominance, but rather as a method of religious training—the notion that one or two women climbing the mountain in male drag damages the mountain’s sacredness is a misunderstanding among supporters of the ban. The occasional breaking of a law does not mean that the law has lost its entire significance Miyagi gives the example that although signs are posted many places proscribing public urination they are sometimes disregarded—this does not mean that the general rule of not urinating in public should be done away with. Shugendō is a lay tradition, thus monastic separation and its implied hierarchy of men over women is theoretically a non-issue. Nevertheless, in practice it differs. He writes:

According to the heavenly endowed differences between men and women in family life, it is only Ōminesan—its natural realm and precipitous cliffs in which this area includes broad precincts—that establishes this domain.<sup>21</sup>

*Katei seikatsu ni okeru danjokan ni tenbun no sōi aru ten yori, tada Ōminesan wa kono kuiki ga hiroi keidai o fukumu shizenkai, dangai zeppeki ga sono kuiki o nashite iru no dearu*

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<sup>21</sup> Miyagi, “Ōminesan kankeisha,” 3.

家庭生活に於ける男女間に天分の相違ある點より、たゞ大峯山は此區域が廣い境内を含む自然界、斷崖絶壁がその區域をなしてゐるのである。

Kishida's articles in *Shugen* and *Kokuritsu kōen*, published three years prior to Miyagi, frame the matter differently. Kishida outlines arguments in favor of opening the mountain to women. First, they argued that it would be inappropriate for Sanjōgatake to become a National Park while excluding half the population from its enjoyment. Yoshino–Kumano National Park was the only candidate with gender restrictions. Restricting part of the land to women detracted from the overall purpose of naming National Park land. Furthermore, Ōminesan was well known for ascetic pursuits but these should extend to female practitioners as well. Third, if the mountain opened, Dorogawa residents would benefit from increased tourism revenue. As Kishida explained, many believed that it was only a matter of time until the mountain opened. Indeed, residents of Kashiwagi, at the eastern edge of the bounded realm, set forth a plan in 1933 to build a new trail toward Sanjōgatake and open it to women, seeking to break Yoshino and Dorogawa's monopoly on mountain entrance. If Dorogawa consented to opening first, however, it would benefit them strategically (and economically).

Kishida then presented a point-by-point response from the traditionalist camp, which consisted primarily of guild members and Dorogawa residents. Their position reflected a combination of belief, tradition, and practical considerations. First, National Park status did not require easy or equal access for all. In fact the uniqueness of Ōminesan as a male-only site further legitimated its special status. Second, women were certainly welcome to pursue ascetic practice, but the spiritual efficacy of the mountain would be lost if the training site was compromised by their presence,

precluding both men's and women's training.<sup>22</sup> Third, the correlation between opening the mountain and increased tourism was fundamentally misguided; in fact, tourism would decline if the mountain opened. Many visitors come to Ōminesan precisely because of its uniqueness as a male enclave, traditionalists maintained, and in the long run it is visiting men (i.e., guilds) who keep the economy and the belief system alive. Finally, opening the backside of the mountain would invite complications, and “determine defeat” in the “battle” over female exclusion.<sup>23</sup>

By the time Yoshino–Kumano National Park received official designation, the prohibition of women at Sanjōgatake had become a subject of discussion in both popular and academic circles. It was also a central concern on the ground in Dorogawa. A meeting was held in Dorogawa after the designation was made, and local residents and devotees unanimously decided to recognize female climbers to Sanjōgatake so long as they did not enter the main hall at the mountaintop. In defiance, area *yamabushi* dressed in ritual attire and armed with swords formed a human chain across the River of Heaven.<sup>24</sup>

#### Setting a “Mountain Rule”

On February 25, 1936, two weeks after the National Park announcement, the *Osaka Asahi Shinbun* ran a headline falsely declaring that Dorogawa decided to open the mountain to women from May 3 that year, at the start of the official open season. The report, perhaps leaked by a pro-opening faction in Dorogawa, shocked many. Osaka

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<sup>22</sup> Rather than allowing an ascetic training mountain to be ruined by “strange things” (*bakemono* 化物), Kishida states further, it ought to remain as is. Kishida, “Ōminesan myaku nyonin tozan” (*Shugen* version), 8.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Personal communication, Dorogawa, July 19, 2014.

and Sakai guilds responded by holding an emergency meeting two days later, on February 27, reaffirming the decision to resolutely uphold the ban. On the following day Sakaguchi Shinbei 坂口親平, representative of the eight most powerful guilds, prepared a “consideration of the state of belief” (*shinkō jōtai jijō* 信仰情態事情) and presented it to the Nara prefectural governor; the petition sought to “unconditionally defend to the end” (*zettai ni shishu suru* 絶対に死守する) and requested a method of mediation.<sup>25</sup> The governor expressed his intent to act accordingly.

More news broke the following day, proclaiming “Ōmine opening to women, finally breaking a 1200-year-old tradition.” The text of the article reports the series of events accurately (the February 27 meeting, the visit to the governor, and the governor’s confirmation) yet ends with an optimistic evaluation, that the state of affairs “gave the impression that the day the door opened for women was approaching (*josei e no tobira o hiraku hi ga chikazuita koto o omowa seta* 女性への扉を開く日が近づいたことを思わせた).<sup>26</sup>

On March 6, Miyagi, who at that time served as chief administrative officer (*shitsuji* 執事) of Shōgo’in, again appeared at the Nara prefectural offices, where he met Governor Nakahara of the Academic Affairs Department. In addition to submitting a detailed report, he issued a formal statement and again requested mediation. Separately from this movement, there were several meetings in Yoshino

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<sup>25</sup> Sakaguchi Shinbei 坂口親平, “Ōminesan mondai ni tsuite no kako hōkokusho” 大峯山問題に就ての経過報告書 (“Progress Report on the Ōminesan Issue”), *Shugen* 78 (1936): 10. A group of Ōmine devotees from Kyoto called Jinben Kyōkai Kyōto Rengōkai 神変協会京都連合会 also sent a representative on March 7 to the governor with a similar appeal.

<sup>26</sup> “Nyonin ni hiraku Ōmine; ni sen nen no dentō, tsui ni yaburu” 女人に開く大峯, 二千年の伝説、遂に破る, *Tōkyō Asahi shinbun*, February 29, 1936.

and Dorogawa. At Chikurin'in on March 14, Goji'in members, local and regional devotee representatives, guild representatives, and Yoshino and Dorogawa ward headmen set a final and unanimous resolution to “permanently, to the end” (*akumade eien ni* 飽くまで永遠に) uphold female exclusion.<sup>27</sup> The group, totaling thirty-one men (not including National Park officials who were present), deliberated for three hours, casing out a legal method for protecting the 1300-year-old tradition.<sup>28</sup> The final decision they conferred was to set female prohibition as “mountain rule.” The park commission, devotees, local representatives of both villages, and guilds spokesmen unanimously agreed to this. On March 19, they prepared the letter on “mountain rule,” affixed it with thirty-one official seals, and sent it to the Nara prefectural governor. It read as follows:

— The Matter Of Enacting Mountain Rule

This time, on the occasion of officially designating Yoshino–Kumano National Park, we resolve the investiture of prohibition to the very end, continuing a thirteen-hundred-year tradition in observance of the dying instructions of Founder Jinben Daibosatsu at our Ōminesan.

— The Ōminesan hall and grounds area is prohibited to women

— Bringing fish meat to Ōminesan grounds is absolutely forbidden

— The capture of birds and wildlife in the Ōminesan hall and grounds area is steadfastly prohibited.

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<sup>27</sup> “Ōminesan nyonin kaihi mondai to kinsei iji ketsuji” 大峯山女人開否問題と禁制維持決議の経過, *Shugen* 修験 78 (1936): 7.

<sup>28</sup> The seals included five Goji'in members, six lay devotee representatives, eight regional devotee representatives, eight guild representatives, two Yoshino area representatives, and two Dorogawa area representatives.

Harvesting of plant species at Ōminesan hall and grounds area is forbidden.<sup>29</sup>

— 山規制定の件

今回吉野熊野国立公園正式指定に際し吾が大峯山に高祖神辨大菩薩の御遺訓を遵守し一千三百年来の傳統を持続して飽く迄叙任禁制を決議す

— 大峯山本堂境内地域は女人禁制なり

— 大峯山境内は魚肉類は絶対に搬入する事を禁ず

— 大峯山本堂境内地域は鳥獸の捕獲を固く禁ずる事

大峯山本堂境内地域は植物類の採取する事を禁ず

On April 12, 1936, at the height of the spring cherry blossom season for which

Yoshino is famed, female exclusion was successfully set as mountain rule.

Ōminesan's managing authorities, guild and devotee representatives, and Yoshino and

Dorogawa village headmen met at Chikurin'in in Yoshinoyama, where the

Ōminesanji head priest (served by the Kizō'in head priest) gave the official

announcement. "This may be a small affair," Sakaguchi wrote, reflecting on the

meeting, "but it made it possible to protect the sacredness (*shinsei* 神聖) of Ōminesan

and leave it as the only female excluded site of a National Park."<sup>30</sup>

It was rumored that Okabe Nagakage of the National Park inspectorate committee (reference page 94) was deeply moved after a sunrise visit to Sanjōgatake

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<sup>29</sup> Sakaguchi, "Ōminesan mondai ni tsuite," 12.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 13. In his article from the same volume, Miyagi noted with gratitude the cooperation of Dorogawa, where at one time there was much talk about lifting the ban, and he thanked devotees for "standing up for their training." "Ōminesan kankeisha," 8.

and determined thereafter to protect the mountain's exclusive sacredness.<sup>31</sup> National Park officials clearly supported the move to establish Sanjōgatake's ban on women, which remained illegal in the eyes of the state, as mountain rule. Nevertheless, they chose not to include this exceptional element of the cultural landscape in official park literature, which seems to purposefully avoid making any mention of women or gender. As the first part of this section demonstrates, moreover, the official line of Yoshino–Kumano National Park also obscures the fact that Tamura and other inspectorate members also overlooked (and perhaps even accommodated) industrial interests in direct conflict with the intended purpose of Japan's National Park system.

We can better understand these glaring omissions—the intentional obscuring of two factors central to Ōminesan's past, present, and future (access and resources)—in light of the policy underwriting the National Park system itself, which Mark McGuire, documentary filmmaker and scholar of modern Japanese religion, describes in terms of a “strong tendency toward promotion and development.”<sup>32</sup> National Park status secures soft power and prestige by bestowing a cultural accolade that sets the mountain apart as exceptional. It also, in theory at least, attracts tourists and thereby stimulates local economies. Two exceptional elements to be found at Yoshino–Kumano National Park (an ongoing ban on women and permitting logging on private lands) might jeopardize these secondary aims (although, on the other hand, some supporters of the ban claimed that visitors came to Ōminesan precisely because it was off-limits to half the population). Given this controversial milieu, it is not entirely surprising that National Park officials determined it best not to broach such

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<sup>31</sup> Sakaguchi, “Ōminesan mondai ni tsuite,” 9.

<sup>32</sup> Mark McGuire, “What's at Stake in Designating Japan's Sacred Mountains as UNESCO World Heritage Sites? Shugendo Practices in the Kii Peninsula,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 40, no. 2 (2013): 326.

topics directly. The official line celebrates Ōminesan as a “profound” and “protected” mountainous area, regarded since ancient times as “the sacred dwelling places of holy spirits and ancestral souls,” where “pilgrims ascend” and many ruins and cultural artifacts can be found. Another part of its exceptional nature is curiously absent.<sup>33</sup>

Some seventy years later, Ōminesan and Sanjōgatake received designation as part of the Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range UNESCO World Heritage Site. In this instance as well, a selective (i.e., genderless) vision of Ōminesan formed the official line, but female exclusion was hotly contested behind the scenes.

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<sup>33</sup> “The Omine [sic] Mountain Range is a fold mountain region consisting of mountains rising 1,500 meters to 1,900 meters above sea level and extending for about 50 kilometers from north to south in the approximate center of the Kii Peninsula. A profound mountainous area known as the ‘Roof of the Kinki Region’ comprises, from north to south, a series of famous peaks, namely, Mt. Sanjogatake (the birthplace of the Shugendō school of Buddhism), Mt. Hakkyogatake (the highest peak in the Kinki region), and Mt. Shakagatake (the dominant peak of the southern part of this area). These mountains have been protected since days of old as the sacred dwelling places of holy spirits and ancestral souls. Many ruins and other cultural artifacts can still be found here. Ascents by pilgrims—particularly up Mt. Sanjogatake—continue to be actively undertaken today” (*Ōminesanmyaku wa, Kiihantō no hobo chūō-bu o hyōkō 1500-1900m no yamayama ga yaku 50 km ni watatte nanboku ni hashiru shūkyokusanchidesu. Kita kara shugendō hasshō no chi Sanjōgadake, Kinki saikōhō no hachikyōgatake, soshite nanbu chiiki no shuhō shakagatake to meihō ga tsuranari, ‘Kinki no yane’ to yobareru okufukai sangaku chiikidesu. Mata, korai yori shinrei ya soryō no sumu seichi to shite mamora re, ōku no iseki nado no bunka-teki shigen ga nokosa rete imasu, soshite genzai demo sanjōgatake o chūshin ni shinkō tozan ga sakan ni okonawarete imasu* 大峯山脈は、紀伊半島のほぼ中央部を標高 1500～1900m の山々が約 50km にわたって南北に走る褶曲山地です。北から修験道発祥の地・山上ヶ岳、近畿最高峰の八経ヶ岳、そして南部地域の主峯・釈迦ヶ岳と名峯が連なり、「近畿の屋根」と呼ばれる奥深い山岳地域です。また、古来より神霊や祖霊の住む聖地として守られ、多くの遺跡などの文化的資源が残されています、そして現在でも山上ヶ岳を中心に信仰登山が盛んに行われています。Ministry of the Environment, National Parks of Japan, Yoshino–Kumano National Park. Information available online at <https://www.env.go.jp/en/nature/nps/park/parks/yoshino.html> (accessed October 25, 2015).

“Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range” World Heritage Site

The most recent re-imagining of Ōminesan concerned its selection as part of the Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range, a UNESCO Heritage Site, in 2004. Since its adoption in 1972, UNESCO’s World Heritage Convention has designated 1031 properties in 162 countries as such sites.<sup>34</sup> Nomination dossiers for World Heritage sites require rigorous articulation of a site’s exceptional cultural or natural uniqueness—they are exercises in collective memory-making and cultural imagining.

Tanaka Riten 田中利典, head regent (*shikkōchō* 執行長) of Kinpusenji (a Buddhist temple in Yoshinoyama and one of three main Shugendō-affiliated Buddhist temples connected to Ōminesan), initiated Ōminesan’s path toward World Heritage status in 1995, concocting a “three-for-one package deal”—recalling the multipronged approach to Yoshino–Kumano National Park—that included Kōyasan, Kumano, and Ōminesan.<sup>35</sup> The Okugake Trail that connects Yoshino and Kumano via the Ōminesan range is also included in the designation. Yoshino and Dorogawa residents enthusiastically promoted the designation, proud of the international acclaim bestowed upon the mountain and eager to benefit from increased tourism revenue that a UNESCO designation almost certainly guaranteed. A news report in the *Los*

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<sup>34</sup> Japan’s number of World Heritage Sites totals nineteen to date, modest in comparison to Italy’s fifty-one or China’s forty-eight, but Japan did not seek a single nomination until 1993. Eleven sites received designation over the following ten years. The Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range was the twelfth to be secured. Today, Japan contributes almost thirteen percent of UNESCO’s total budget. A complete list of sites and accompanying maps and dossiers can be found at <http://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/jp> (accessed October 24, 2015).

<sup>35</sup> McGuire, “What’s at Stake,” 331.

*Angeles Times* on the heels of the designation notes that Dorogawa headman Masutani Gen'ichi 榎谷源逸 proudly showed off “World Heritage site key chains and World Heritage site bells that hang from a climber's hip and tinkle to ward off bears.”<sup>36</sup> A special edition of Kirin Beer was made to celebrate the UNESCO designation. At one inn in Yoshinoyama I visited in July 2014, promotional material still hung on the walls.

The collective opinion of guilds and Yoshino and Dorogawa residents remained largely unchanged from the 1930s. They feared that Ōminesan would lose its sacredness and people would stop coming to the mountain if the ban were lifted. They also held that female exclusion was a private religious matter—as discussed above, it has been a government-sanctioned “mountain rule” since 1936. Many people, however, women’s groups in particular, were dismayed at the nomination and mobilized to oppose it. The Nara Women’s History Research Group (*Nara joseishi kenkyū kai* 奈良女性史研究会), for example, held a lecture series in 2001 to discuss gender discrimination in the context of tradition and custom at the mountain. The I-Net Women’s Conference of Nara (*Ai netto josei kaigi*, *Nara* アイネット女性会議なら) presented a report to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women that same year. A group called The Association Seeking to Lift “Ōminesan’s Female Exclusion” (“Ōminesan nyonin kinsei” no *kaihō wo motomeru kai* 「大峯山女人禁制」の開放を求める会; hereafter *Motomeru kai*) launched in 2003, led by scholar and advocate Minamoto Junko 源順子.

The Association collected signatures protesting the designation, drawing on the support of the female teachers who climbed Sanjōgatake in 1999, members of the

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<sup>36</sup> Bruce Wallace, “A Mountain Pilgrimage For Men Only: Tradition Bars Female Climbers” (*Los Angeles Times*, September 4, 2004).

Nara Women's History Research Group, and others. In March, *Motomeru kai* opened a symposium to discuss Ōminesan's female exclusion. According to the Association's website, 12,418 signatures were counted as of March 31, 2004.<sup>37</sup> They ranged from women who had climbed Ōminesan to Dorogawa local people and even male temple priests. In April, *Motomeru kai* sent the signatures, along with a request to review the legality of female exclusion, to the following parties: the UNESCO World Heritage Commission, Japan's Prime Minister, the Minister of Education, Sports, and Technology (*Monbu kagaku daijin* 文部科学大臣), Minister of Justice (*Hōmu daijin* 法務大臣), Minister of Foreign Affairs (*Gaimu daijin* 外務大臣), the Gender Equality Bureau of the Cabinet Office (*Naikaku fu danjo kyōdō sankakukyoku* 内閣府男女共同参画局), Nara Prefectural Government (*Nara kenchō* 奈良県庁), and the Nara District Legal Affairs Bureau (*Nara chihō hōmukyoku* 奈良地方法務局), the Goji-in, the Shugendō "Three Mountains" temple head priests, lay religious climbing guilds, and the village headmen of Dorogawa and Yoshino, climbing guilds, and the village headmen of Dorogawa and Yoshino.

The petition claims: (1) a large sum of public tax money had been used to promote the UNESCO designation. The prefectural budget for World Heritage site promotion and related commemorative projects amounted to roughly eighty-two million yen in 2002 (roughly \$654,000), seventeen million yen in 2003 (roughly \$155,000), and eighty-three million yen in 2004 (roughly \$798,000); (2) several roads and trails within the restricted realm occupied public land and received public funds for repairs; and (3) the ban violates the United Nations Convention for Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (ratified by Japan in 1985), the Japanese Constitution, and the 1999 Basic Act For A Gender Equal Society (*Danjo kyōdō*

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<sup>37</sup> <http://www.on-kaiho.com/action/contents.html> (accessed October 24, 2015).

*sankaku shakai kihonhō* 男女共同参画社会基本法) and numerous other prefectural and local regulations.<sup>38</sup> *Motomeru kai* members even protested on the steps of the Zaō Hall at Kinpusenji on October 13, 2003, but their efforts were roundly ineffective.<sup>39</sup>

The Goji'in reaffirmed with a united voice that the mountain would remain closed. A new signboard was at the main trailhead on April 28, 2014.

Deciding this female barrier is by no means something shaped by only our practitioners. The countless people prior who, while revering this sacred mountain, discovered the foundation of their hearts here were those who spent over a thousand years building it up as a religious tradition.

Furthermore, in regard to maintaining the boundary, along with believers and the local people it was also transmitted by women who upheld the

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid. I estimated the figures based on the yearly average exchange rate. The other regulations *Motomeru kai* noted include the Nara Prefecture Ordinance Concerning Respect for Human Rights and the Abolition of All Discrimination (*Nara ken arayuru sabetsu no teppai oyobi jinken no sonchō ni kansuru jōrei* 奈良県あらゆる差別の撤廃及び人権の尊重に関する条例, 1997), Nara Prefecture Ordinance for the Promotion of Gender Equality (*Nara ken danjo kyōdō sankaku suishin jōrei* 奈良県男女共同参画推進条例, 2001), Yoshinoyama Town Ordinance Concerning Human Rights Protection and the Abolition of All Discrimination (*Yoshinomachi arayuru sabetsu no teppai to jinken yōgo ni kansuru jōrei* 吉野町あらゆる差別の撤廃と人権擁護に関する条例, 1997), and the Declaration Concerning "Village Human Rights Protection" (*Jinken yōgo mura' ni kansuru sengen* 「人権擁護村」に関する宣言). This information is available at <http://www.on-kaiho.com/action/20040828.html> (accessed October 28, 2015). More information on the United Nations Convention for Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women can be found on the official site <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/> (accessed October 28, 2015). For the 1999 Basic Act For A Gender Equal Society see (in Japanese) [http://www.gender.go.jp/about\\_danjo/law/kihon/9906kihonhou.html](http://www.gender.go.jp/about_danjo/law/kihon/9906kihonhou.html) (accessed October 28, 2015).

<sup>39</sup> A photo of women protesting with banners in Japanese and Korean appears in Fujiwara Tomoyo 藤原智代, “‘Ōminesan nyonin kinsei’ no kaihō o motomeru undō madeni, dono yōna undō ga arimashita ka” 「大峰山女人禁制」の開放を求める運動までに、どのような運動がありましたか, in “*Nyonin kinsei*” Q&A. 「女人禁制」 Q&A, edited by Minamoto Junko 源淳子, 152–156 (Osaka: Kaihō Shuppansha), 154.

belief. Even today, without questioning the forbidding of women from Sanjōgatake, men and women alike train according to Shugendō, and we grasp it as the boundary of high precept in the capacity of the belief of those who believe, and while absolutely considering the point of view of the believers in the discussion, we uphold the boundary.<sup>40</sup>

*Kono nyonin kekkai wa kesshite, watakushi-tachi shugenja nomi ni yotte katachi tsukura reta monode wa arimasen. Kono reizan o aogi minagara, kokoro no yori dokoro o miidashita musū no senjin-tachi ga, issennen amari no toki o kakete, shūkyō-teki dentō to shite tsukuriagete kita monodearimasu. Mata kekkai iji ni tsuite wa, shinto ya jimoto no hitobito to tomoni shinkō o mamori tsutaete kita josei-tachi ni yotte mo denshō sarete kimashita. Watakushidomo wa, kyō ni oite mo, Sanjōgadake no nyonin kekkai o danjo towazu shūkendō de shugyō shi, shinkō suru mono no shinkō to shite no kairitsu-jō no kekkai to torae, akumademo shinkō-sha no tachiba o motte giron o kuwaetsutsu, katsu kekkai o iji shite orimasu.*

この女人結界は決して、わたくし達修験者のみによって形つくられたものではありません。この霊山を仰ぎ見ながら、心のよりどころを見出した無数の先人達が、壱千年あまりの時をかけて、宗教的伝統として作り上げてきたものであります。また結界維持については、信徒や地元の人々と共に信仰を守り伝えてきた女性たちによっても伝承されてきました。私どもは、今日においても、山上ヶ岳の女

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<sup>40</sup> Quoted in Usui Atsuko 薄井篤子, “Tojiru seichi, aku seichi—‘Nyonin kinsei/nyonin kekkai’ o meguru giron kara miete kuru mono” 閉じる聖地、開く聖地—女人禁制・女人結界をめぐる議論から見えてくるもの, *Gendai shūkyō* 現代宗教, *Tokushū* “*Shūkyō fukkō no chūryū*” 特集「宗教復興の潮流」(2005): 210–211.

人結界を男女問わず修験道で修行し、信仰する者の信仰としての戒律上の結界ととらえ、あくまでも信仰者の立場をもって議論を加えつつ、且つ結界を維持しております。

It is difficult to challenge Minamoto and *Motomeru kai* when they claim UNESCO simply did not regard female exclusion as an important issue.<sup>41</sup> The 288-page nomination dossier, which “should provide all the information to demonstrate that the property is truly of ‘outstanding universal value’” and requires official state endorsement before being submitted to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre in Paris, France, makes not a single mention of women or gender in its lengthy descriptions of pilgrimage, sites, temples, archaeology.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, when the International Council on Monuments and Sites surveyed Ōminesan, they sent a single person—a male professor from Korea. This came as a great relief in Dorogawa where, according to headman Masutani, residents had decided in advance that if a woman arrived as part of the inspectorate team she would be refused entrance to Sanjōgatake, even if it jeopardized the entire World Heritage designation.<sup>43</sup>

Ōminesan is celebrated for its World Heritage and National Park status, but as scholars like cultural heritage specialist Sophia Labadi and McGuire have pointed out,

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<sup>41</sup> Minamoto was quoted as saying, “UNESCO didn’t even seem to think this was an issue.” Wallace, “A Mountain Pilgrimage For Men Only.”

<sup>42</sup> Intergovernmental Committee for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, “Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention,” (Paris, 2012) <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/opguide12-en.pdf> (accessed October 28, 2015); ICOMOS, “Dossier for designation of the Kii mountain range as a UNESCO World Heritage site” (no. 1142. Japan and Paris, 2004).

<sup>43</sup> Wallace, “A Mountain Pilgrimage For Men Only.”

neither land nor people receive equal treatment in the promotion of cultural heritage.<sup>44</sup>

Labadi's research on world heritage representations identifies a problematic tendency toward creating "linear, continuous and unilateral presentations of history" that "omit different perspectives and other histories that might have been linked to the site."<sup>45</sup>

The dossier on Ōminesan crafts an idealized vision of the mountain that emphasizes its "outstanding universal value" at the cost of erasing one of its most conspicuous features, the religious tradition of prohibiting women's access.

The same kind of epistemological selectivity is evident in the promotion of the Okugake Trail. As the reader will recall from chapter one, the Okugake Trail is historically Japan's Agency for Cultural Affairs and the Nara Prefectural Government have resisted bestowing accolades on the Okugake Trail precisely because it cannot be sufficiently documented as a historical route. Nevertheless, World Heritage literature presents the Okugake Trail as linking "the northern and southern sites of Yoshino and Omine, and Kumano Sanzan," since it was "first constructed in the early 8th century."<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Sophia Labadi, "Representations of the Nation and Cultural Diversity in Discourses on World Heritage," *Journal of Social Archaeology* 7, no. 2 (2007): 147–170; and *UNESCO, Cultural Heritage, and Outstanding Universal Value: Value-Based Analyses of the World Heritage and Intangible Cultural Heritage Conventions*. (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2013). McGuire notes that "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." "What's at Stake," 345.

<sup>45</sup> Labadi, "Representations of the Nation and Cultural Diversity in Discourses on World Heritage," 161.

<sup>46</sup> "Omine [sic] Okugakemichi, linked the northern and southern sites of Yoshino and Omine, and Kumano Sanzan. This route was used as a stage in ascetic practices by Buddhist priests. It passes along high mountain ridges between 1000 and 2000 metres above sea level. Legend suggests that it was first constructed in the early 8<sup>th</sup> century. In the 12<sup>th</sup> century there were 120 delineated significant places along the route such as caves or villages; by the 17<sup>th</sup> century these had been reduced to 75. The route passes through a forest of silver fir trees,

## Conclusions

Today's official line on Ōminesan, as crafted by National Park and World Heritage designations, restates many of the sentiments recorded a millennium earlier in the *Giso rokujō*, but with one major exception: Sanjōgatake's ban on women is conspicuously absent. The Ōminesan re-imagined in 1936 and 2004 is a selective vision, one that emphasizes certain outstanding characteristics of the mountains and leaves others out, as obliged by contemporary agendas. Female exclusion, technically an illegal practice since 1872, may have been expunged from National Park and World Heritage façades, but it was hotly contested on the ground. In the 1930s, Ōminesan's managing bodies and lay climbing guilds went to great lengths to secure female exclusion as a permanent and eternal tradition at the mountain during the National Park selection period.

In the twenty-first century, the process of nominating Ōminesan as a World Heritage site reinvigorated debate about the mountain's ongoing prohibition of women, drawing critique from new angles (e.g., human rights) and by new parties (e.g., *Motomeru kai*). Whereas dispute at the time of the National Park selection prompted internal panic, causing supporters to seek further confirmation of the ban as "mountain rule," we see the locus of contention shifting away from the center in the new millennium. Still, in both instances the official line rendered all challenges to the ban, and the ban itself, invisible.

The next chapter clarifies the practice of female boundaries at Ōminesan from a different angle still, focusing on the complex institutional arrangement of the mountain. Of great interest is the attempt by the temple authorities, who as I show above clearly supported the ban theretofore, sought to open Sanjōgatake to women in

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groves of Magnolia and a group of ancient cedar trees." ICOMOS, 36.

the year 2000 on the occasion of the 1300th anniversary of En no Gyōja's death. The plan never materialized, but we can better understand the lack of response to *Motomeru kai's* challenges at the time of the World Heritage designation with recourse to this earlier juncture.

## Chapter Four:

### Keys to the Mountain

The five temples that manage Ōminesanji and the “Three Mountain” Shugendō-affiliated temples (Daigoji, Shōgo’in, Kinpusenji), which represent as many as one million parishioners and devotees, agreed for the first time in history—on the occasion of the sacred founder En no Gyōja’s 1300th Death Anniversary in 2000—to lift the mountain’s ban on women.<sup>1</sup> Just how eight guilds, which speak for groups of laymen (both practitioners and their supporters) that number at the most in the thousands today, were able to challenge and ultimately prevent this monumental initiative is the subject of this short chapter. The ratio between entity and vote is disproportionate, but that comprises only part of the explanation. The authority exercised by guilds in managing the mountaintop, the culmination of deep-seated religious and economic ties to Dorogawa and Sanjōgatake, allowed them to play a key role in indefinitely forestalling the temple proposal.

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<sup>1</sup> In 1890, the number of devotees hiring mountain guides from Tōnan’in numbered 13,000, Kizō’in counted 15,000, and Sakuramotobō listed 15,000, according to Murakami Senjō 村上專精, Tsuji Zennosuke 辻善之助, and Washio Junkyō 鷺尾順敬, *Meiji ishin shinbutsu bunri shiryō* 明治維新神仏分離史料 2 (Meicho shuppan, 1970), 351. In 1925, the *Ōsaka Asahi shinbun* reported that Ōminesan devotees numbered over a million, and yearly visitors to Ōminesan exceeded ten thousand. *Ōsaka Asahi shinbun*, December 3, 1925. In 1992, Zenitani estimated over one million devotees. Kizu, *Nyonin kinsei*, 95. At the time of writing, Kyōtani of the Tenkawa Research Association surmised that although twenty years ago there were about 80,000 devotees, today that number has probably decreased to 10,000. Guild numbers are even more difficult to pinpoint, but the people I spoke with generally estimate them to be in the low thousands and decreasing every year. Kyōtani, interview, August 2, 2015.

## The Rise of Climbing Guilds

For more than a thousand years mountain ascetics—both those who lived at or near Ōminesan and those who visited regularly or as part of traveling religious practices—have regarded the Ōminesan range, and Sanjōgatake in particular, as a sacred locus of religious practice. Individual ascetic practitioners were eventually joined by groups of men who formed religious confraternities, or guilds. The first Shugendō affiliated guild on record is a Kumano-centered group called the Nomura-dono Guild (*Nomura dono kō* 野村殿講), which dates to the mid-fifteenth century and comprised a diverse roster of provincial samurai, small farmers, monks, and even women (Kumano was never off-limits to women). As Miyake notes, Kumano groups like Nomura-dono flourished in the Kinki region during the early modern period, but declined along with Kumano pilgrimage by the Meiji period.<sup>2</sup>

In contrast, mountain climbing guilds visiting Sanjōgatake from the Yoshino side gradually developed from early modern times. The *Gonjo Ōnenki* 巖助往年記 (*Chronicle of former years*, 1494-1563), the diary of Muromachi-period Daigoji priest Gonjo 巖助, for example, notes that in 1535 a “mountaintop guild” (*sanjō kō* 山上講) of fifty-seven traveled to Murō 室生 and Hatsuse 泊瀬 for religious pilgrimage and that in 1606 there was a mountaintop guild at Mochiidono 餅飯殿 in Nara.<sup>3</sup> From that time, Ōminesan-centered guilds emerge, organized by samurai, farmer, and merchant groups in Osaka and nearby Sakai 堺.

Summer climbs from either Dorogawa or Yoshino to Sanjōgatake to worship a fifteenth-century En no Gyōja image enshrined at a hall atop Sanjōgatake became a

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<sup>2</sup> Miyake, *Shugendō: Yamabushi no rekishi to shisō* 修験道：山伏の歴史と思想 (Tokyo: Kyōikusha, 1978), 66.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

regular occurrence. Among the guilds, Iwagumi 岩組 rose in prominence, and eventually organized subsidiary guilds (many of which are maintained today). With Iwagumi at the center, a group of eight guilds—also including Kōmyō 光明, Sangō 三郷, and Kyōbashi 京橋 of Osaka, and Torige 鳥毛, Ryōgō 両郷, Izutsu 井筒, Goryū 五流 of Sakai—became known collectively as the “Eight Guilds of Osaka and Sakai” (*Hangai yakkō* 阪堺八講; also known as *yatsushima yakkō* 八島役講 and *yakkō* 役講). They assumed the role of ritually opening and closing the hall each year, a duty they perform to this day.<sup>4</sup>

During the mountain’s open season, these guilds of men embarked upon religious pilgrimages from both Yoshino and Dorogawa. Yoshino had historically overseen Sanjōgatake, but Dorogawa increasingly rose in prominence as both an optional extension of southbound Yoshino pilgrims, who sometimes descended into Dorogawa after worship at Sanjōgatake. Dorogawa also developed independently as a support site for Sanjōgatake pilgrims, and an abode catering to male guilds in particular. Religious tourism was a central factor in the growing prosperity of both Yoshino and Dorogawa, and competition for revenue often provoked skirmishes between the two sides. As discussed in chapter two, the late nineteenth-century Separation Orders led to Dorogawa’s acquisition of almost equal land rights at Sanjōgatake (including its official address) and further solidified its place as the main trailhead.

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<sup>4</sup> Several of the eight main guilds maintain specific ties with Yoshino and Dorogawa temples. For example Iwagumi is connected to Tōnan’in, Sangō is connected to Kizō’in, and Torige and Izutsu are connected to Ryūsenji. It should also be noted that in both premodern and present times, many other climbing guilds outside of this group of eight existed. They also perform yearly “peak entering” rituals and coming-of-age ceremonies for young boys.

The Dorogawa area of Tenkawa Village, at the western foot of Sanjōgatake, has long held a deep connection to Ōminesan Shugendō. Local people profess to be descendants of En no Gyōja’s demon disciple Goki (vis-à-vis Zenki), vowed protectors of the mountain. Kyōtani attributes Dorogawa's prosperity as a town to the special right (*tokken* 特権) En no Gyōja gave Goki to conduct incantations and prayers (*kaji kitō* 加持祈祷). Apart from legend, we know that Dorogawa emerged as a support site for religious pilgrims, providing lodges, eateries, mountain guide services, and teahouses, as well as selling souvenirs and a specialty stomach medicine called Daranisuke. Dorogawa’s eleven main lodging sites, each maintaining ties to Shugendō guilds dating to premodern times, continue to provide similar services today. I list them here in no particular order, with their reputed establishment dates where available: Masugen 柘源, Okumura Sōsuke 奥村宗助, Kadojin 角甚 (1688), Kōryokuen Nishisei 光緑園西清, Hanaya Tokubei 花屋徳兵 (claiming to be the oldest, in operation for more than 500 years), Marufumi 丸文, Kinokuniya Jinpachi 紀ノ国屋甚八 (300 years running), Atarashiya あたらし屋, Saratoku 皿徳, Nishigi 西儀, and Kuboji 久保治. These inns developed in tandem with and in support of lay guilds—each inn originally catered to a specific groups and maintained long-term relationships.

According to Kyōtani, Dorogawa people carry a reputation as, “winter beggars and summer ministers” (*natsu daijin no fuyu kojiki* 夏大臣の冬乞食)—they are rich in the summer and poor in the winter, owing to the town’s seasonal economy.<sup>5</sup> Mountain climbing is a seasonal business, and innkeepers often traveled about selling chopsticks, rice scoops, and other woodcrafts during the off-season. In addition to

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<sup>5</sup> Kyōtani, interview, August 3, 2015.

logistically accommodating guild members, some inns also participated in their ceremonial rituals. The relationship between guilds and Dorogawa locals deepened especially in the years following World War II, when food shortage became a major issue. One innkeeper explained that locals would travel during the off-season to the farms of wealthy members and trade their handicrafts for food. In addition, the guilds also lent considerable support to the community after a great fire ravaged much of the town and Ryūsenji in 1946 (see chapter six).

In order to fully grasp the power exercised by Ōminesan's guilds, we need to further enquire into Sanjōgatake's organizational structure. A brief review of Meiji period changes will be helpful here (the reader may also refer to chapter two for reference). In 1873, the Mountaintop Zaō Hall (present-day Ōminesanji) became the Inner Precinct of Kinpu Shrine and the number of religious pilgrims sharply declined. Concerned parties in Yoshino and Dorogawa moved the Ascetic's Hall from Ozasa (which Dorogawa had theretofore managed under the auspices of Tōzan lineage of Shugendō) to an adjacent mountaintop location, which Yoshino and Dorogawa agreed to share management from 1885. When the entire mountaintop was allowed to resume its Buddhist affiliation from 1886, Ryūsenji in Dorogawa was charged with ritual and practitioner affairs, and Yoshino's management capacity came to be divided between four temples (Tōnan'in, Chikurin'in, Sakuramotobō, and Kizō'in). This total of five temples took the name Goji'in in 1892.

Since the Meiji reorganization, conflicts arose several times between Yoshino and Dorogawa concerning who would serve as head priest of the mountaintop temple, among many other matters. This was eventually settled in May 1942 through Ministry of Education (*Monbushō* 文部省) arbitration. A memorandum was issued stating that the Mountaintop Main Hall would be renamed Ōminesanji and share dual Shingon

and Tendai affiliations. Since then, the four temples on the Yoshino side appoint a priest to serve at Ōminesanji every two years. Ryūsenji continues to handle ritual affairs on a permanent basis, and its head priest serves at Ōminesanji as well on a rotating basis. The Ōminesanji head priest rotates once a year between Ryūsenji and the four Yoshino temples. Salient to this study is the fact that Ōminesan's eight most powerful guilds (the "Eight Guilds of Osaka and Sakai") received an official share of Sanjōgatake's managing responsibility on May 8, 1887. Each of the eight main guilds would appoint one member who, along with the local town representatives, holds one vote in Ōminesan's management. In addition, guild representatives assumed the duty of opening and closing the mountain at the equinoctial ritual ceremonies.

Every May and November, head priests of each Goji'in temple (Tōnan'in, Kizō'in, Chikurin'in, Sakuramotobō, and Ryūsenji), three lay individuals each from Yoshino and Dorogawa, and one representative from each of the eight major lay guilds gather to discuss various issues at the mountain. The official status of female exclusion, including boundary lines and how to handle repeated attempts by women to climb Sanjōgatake, is filtered through and ultimately determined by this managing body. To enact change, all parties are asked to reach a unanimous consensus. This strict institutional arrangement makes it difficult to enact major changes, such as opening the mountain to women. And yet, a grouping of the three head Shugendō temples (Daigoji, Shōgo'in, and Kinpusenji) attempted to accomplish precisely for the 1300th Death Anniversary of founder En no Gyōja in the year 2000.

## Three Mountains, One Voice

Early May is a busy time of the year at Ōminesan. Sanjōgatake officially opens from May 3 to September 23.<sup>6</sup> Snows have melted away, and men rush to prepare main Ōminesanji's main hall, teahouses, and overnight lodges for another year of religious pilgrims. Dorogawa will emerge from winter's slumber, its eleven historic inns bustling with activity for the next five months hosting guilds of lay devotees (predominantly male) and, today, groups of tourists and sport-climbers.

Collaboration on a jointly published compendium of Shugendō related materials brought Daigoji, Shōgo'in, and Kinpusenji into close collaboration in the early 1990s.<sup>7</sup> In December of 1993, the staff of the newspaper *Mainichi shinbun* suggested to Kinpusenji that they develop a special art exhibition for the 1300th Death Anniversary of En no Gyōja in 2000. Leading the collaboration was Nakada Junwa 仲田順和, head regent (*shikkōchō* 執行長) of Daigoji, Miyagi Tainen 宮城泰年, chief administrative officer (*shitsujichō* 執事長) of Shōgo'in, and Tanaka Riten 田中利典, Kinpusenji's Director of Education and Learning (*kyōgaku buchō* 教学部長).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> In 1988, Miyake noted September 22, and explained that before World War II it began April 8 and ended September 7. *Ōmine Shugendō no kenkyū*, 221. The opening was pushed back a month to May 8, and in 1967 changed again to May 3 (ostensibly because it falls during Japan's "Golden Week" of consecutive national holidays).

<sup>7</sup> *Shugendō shugyō taikai* 修験道修行大系, edited by Shugendō shugyō taikai hensankai 修験道修行大系編纂会編 (Tokyo: Kokusho kankōkai, 1994).

<sup>8</sup> Their respective positions have changed since this time. Nakada now serves as head priest (*zasu* 座主) of Daigoji, Miyagi serves as head priest (*monshu* 門主) of Shōgo'in, and Tanaka serves as both head of temple office for the Kinpusen Shugen sect (*Kinpusen shugenshū shūmu sōchō* 金峯山修験本宗宗務総長), Kinpusenji head regent, and head priest (*jūshoku* 住職) of Rinnan'in 林南院 (a small Shugendō temple in Ayabe 綾部 to the northwest of Kyoto).

After two years of informal discussion, Kinpusenji, Shōgo'in and newspaper representatives visited Daigoji in July 1996, and agreed to open an exhibition. Nakada of Daigoji proposed they form a council to discuss cooperative efforts for the upcoming memorial. Each temple confirmed with their respective members, and “Three Head Mountains Death Anniversary Liaison Group” (*Sanbonsan onki renraku kai* 三本山御遠忌連絡会) launched.<sup>9</sup>

Elaborate plans unfolded during some thirty-nine consultations and two conferences, including joint Shugendō ritual activities and a major art exhibition, “The World of En no Gyoja and Shugendo: Secret Treasures of Mountain Asceticism Exhibit” (*En no Gyōja to Shugendō no sekai: sangaku shūkyō no hihō* 役行者と修験道の世界: 山岳信仰の秘宝) to be opened in Tokyo and Osaka, along with numerous other temple-specific commemorative events.<sup>10</sup> The single item topping almost every consultation was Ōminesan's ban on women and an emerging plan to abolish it permanently.

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<sup>9</sup> This section draws heavily from the official publication of the temple consortium, *Shin jidai ni muketa Shugen sanbonsan no kiseki* 新時代に向けた修験三本山の軌跡 (*En no Gyōja sen sanbyaku nen go-onki kiroku hensan iinkai* 役行者千三百年御遠忌記録編纂委員会, 2003). Cited as *Shin jidai*.

<sup>10</sup> Female exclusion topped the agenda of almost every meeting, until the plan was shelved. Still, topics concerning women and gender appeared on meeting agendas sporadically thereafter. For example, on August 9, 1998, a Three Mountains representative noted that although effort and attention had shifted to the art exhibition, they still sought to lift the ban at Sanjōgatake and questioned the “feeling of stagnancy” toward the matter among the group—the logic behind the abolition was plentiful, and scarce for proponents of the ban, the members noted. Furthermore, the Three Mountains planned a mixed-gender fire ritual to coincide with the opening of the exhibition. *Ibid.*, 99.

On September 12, 1997, the Three Mountains unanimously agreed to abolish Sanjōgatake’s ban on women.<sup>11</sup> Their decision rested on four main points, which were articulated in a written proclamation (I provide a full translation in Appendix Three). First, women have been prevented from direct participation in the Shugendō tradition even though the tradition itself is founded as a lay organization comprised of both men and women that does not support gender discrimination. Second, women’s “direct belief and ascetic practice” (*josei no chokusetsu na shinkō ya shugyō* 女性の直接的な信仰や修行) has been rapidly increasing, thanks to the efforts of local Shugendō temples and groups. Third, these local Shugendō temples and groups have been actively educating women as Shugendō practitioners and requesting that women be allowed active participate at Ōminesan. Finally, the document framed Shugendō as a “great tradition” that responds to the demands of its devotees in a form appropriate to contemporary times.<sup>12</sup> Prior attempts to lift the ban, they claimed, aimed not at promoting women’s beliefs and practices but rather sought the “reckless tearing apart of tradition.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> This is documented in the notes of the fifteenth consultation. The Yoshino district representative had been consulted prior and consented to the plan; perplexingly, meeting notes state that the Dorogawa district representative “did not call out of fear of dealing with confusing the matter of female exclusion with the matter of establishing a storage depot” (*Dorogawa-ku sōdai wa nyonin kekkai mondai to shūzō-ko kensetsu no mondai o kondō shite atsukau to iu kigu no tame koe o kakezu* 洞川区総代は女人結界問題と収蔵庫建設の問題を混同して扱うという危惧のため声をかけず). A meeting with the guilds to broach the subject was postponed due to insufficient participants. Without receiving input from these parties, the consortium set a plan to announce the decision in October. *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>13</sup> Original text reads: “yamikumona dentō no haki” やみくもな伝統の破棄. *Ibid.*, 108.

Fifteen joint consultations—consisting of in-depth discussion on the origins, historical development, and present state of female exclusion at Ōminesan, as well as checking the “temperature difference” (*ondosa no chigai* 温度差の違い) of concerned parties—guided the decision.<sup>14</sup> The Goji’in pledged full support to the initiative in January 1997, stating that they did not necessarily wish to lift the ban, but felt they had no choice in light of three prominent concerns: women’s participation, the status of women, and gender equality. In short, the Goji’in felt they could no longer justify the prohibition of women in the present age.

Plans to lift the ban were first revealed to the guilds on September 20 at the private residence of Sangō 三郷 guild head. Opinions were collected at Sanjōgatake and in Yoshino and Dorogawa on the 25<sup>th</sup>, and a general assembly of representatives was held at Kizō’in on the 29<sup>th</sup>. At ten in the morning on October 3, the eight main guilds convened in Osaka and the temple consortium officially relayed their decision to open Sanjōgatake on May 3, 2000.

#### “A Necessary Cooling-Off Period”

Responding to the announcement, guild representatives holding keys to the mountaintop temple threatened to suspend all donations and further engagement with the mountain if these plans proceeded. Also under threat was the removal of all memorial placards, steles, and icons from Ōminesanji unless the temples completely retracted the plan.<sup>15</sup> In Dorogawa, where guild support provided the bulk of town revenue, the response was similarly oppositional. Gaynor Sekimori, who interviewed Dorogawa headman Masutani about the incident, notes a perceived “high-handed

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>15</sup> Personal communication, Dorogawa, September 22, 2014.

attitude” on behalf of the Three Mountains group, Shōgo’in in particular, that led Dorogawa residents to feel they had no voice in the situation.<sup>16</sup> Sekimori differentiates the emotional response on the ground, in Dorogawa and from the guilds, from the rational logic behind the temple plan.

One day after the soft announcement, the paper *Mainichi shinbun* without notice (or permission it seems) publicly announced the plans to lift the ban on October 4, running the headline, “Toward the Annulment of Female Prohibition at Ōminesan (“Ōminesan, nyonin kinsei teppai e” 大峰山、女人禁制撤廃へ), aggravating the situation and deepening the fissure between temple authorities and lay Ōminesan devotees.<sup>17</sup> In light of the strong negative response, led by the guilds (not only the eight major groups but many others) and reverberating throughout the Dorogawa community, the temple consortium completely revoked the abolishment proposal and called for a necessary “cooling-off period” (*reikyaku kikan* 冷却期間) on December 26.<sup>18</sup>

This “cooling-off period” did not immediately transpire though. In fact, the “crisis consciousness” expanded in subsequent months, driven by further media reports that the ban had already been lifted.<sup>19</sup> Notes from the March 26 meeting tell of Dorogawa locals, led by headman Masutani Gen’itsu 枡谷源逸, posting notices at the main trailhead reading, “Ōminesan, in the same manner as before, is off limits to

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<sup>16</sup> Sekimori, “Sacralizing the Border,” 67.

<sup>17</sup> The reporter apologized at Daigoji, as reported in October 11 meeting notes.

<sup>18</sup> *Shin jidai*, 97.

<sup>19</sup> I adapted the term “crisis consciousness” from Suzuki’s *kiki ishiki* 危機意識. *Nyonin kinsei*, 74.

women” (*Ōminesan wa ima made tōri, nyonin kinsei de gozaimasu* 大峰山は今まで通り、女人禁制でございます).

Adding further fuel to the fire, ten female instructors belonging to the Gender Equality Education and Research Promotion Committee (*Danjo kyōsei kyōiku kenkyū suishin iinkai* 男女共生教育研究推進委員会) of the Nara Prefecture Teachers' Union (*Nara ken kyōshokuin kumiai* 奈良県教職員組合) climbed Sanjōgatake on August 1, 1999. The women, several family members, and eight male mountain climbing guides summited the forbidden peak from Lotus Crossing on the Inamuragatake side. Their act did not go unnoticed by Ōminesan's managing bodies, who did not take kindly to the intrusion. Gojō Yoshikazu 五條良知, assistant head priest of Tōnan'in 東南院, expressed bewilderment at the group for ascending the mountain merely for recreational reasons, not out of a sense of religious conviction. Kizō'in head priest Nakai Kyōzen 中井教善 expressed “indignation toward the educators for arbitrarily breaking the long tradition of prohibition,” and noted that he felt sorry for enthusiastic female Shugendō practitioners.<sup>20</sup>

Tanaka Atsumi 田中敦三, committee chairman of the teacher's union, held a press conference on November 18 to publicly apologize. “Female exclusion is gender discrimination against women,” he declared, “but there is a problem in their method.”<sup>21</sup> Ōminesanji held a conference the following day. They accepted the apology and released the statement: “It [the teacher's climb] it is a greatly regrettable act that crushes the hearts of believers” (*shinkō-sha no kokoro o fuminijiru, taihen*

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>21</sup> Original text reads: “Nyonin kinsei wa josei sabetsudaga, yarikata ni mondai ga atta” 女人禁制は女性差別だが、やり方に問題があった。Ibid.

*ikan'na kōidearu* 信仰者の心を踏みにじる、大変遺憾な行為である).<sup>22</sup> En no Gyōja's 1300-year Grand Death Anniversary rites were held at the main hall of Ōminesanji on August 27, 2000, attended by roughly one thousand officials, laymen, and spectators, but not a single woman (women did participate in other commemorative events, as I discuss in chapter six).

## Conclusions

The Goji'in and Ōminesan's head Shugendō temples nearly succeeded at abolishing the mountain rule on women for En no Gyōja's 1300th Death Anniversary in the year 2000, but strong opposition from the guilds prevailed in the end. In the words of one anonymous guild member willing to speak frankly on the matter, "Why should there even be a discussion when we do everything [in terms of support]?" Ryūsenji head priest Okada, commenting on the power of the guilds, simply remarked, "the guilds came first" (*yakukōsan wa izen* 役講さんは以前).<sup>23</sup> Ōminesan's lay guilds hold the mountain's purse strings and its keys (quite literally in the case of the former).

Kino, seventh-generation proprietor of Dorogawa inn Kinokuniya Jinpachi, explained that before World War II roughly one hundred men from each of the eight main guilds participated yearly in the mountain openings. That figure today has fallen by two-thirds in his estimation. Kino speculated that if temple authorities chose to open the mountain, local people and the guilds would likely follow along today, owing to the current state of affairs.<sup>24</sup> And yet, the foregoing story of the 1300th Death Anniversary of En no Gyōja in 2000 demonstrates that it is impossible to

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Okada, interview.

<sup>24</sup> Kino, interview, September 20, 2014.

predict or control the sentiment invested in the practice of female exclusion. The same parties who in 1970 permitted the considerable reduction of Sanjōgatake's bounded realm in this instance clung vehemently to the safety of tradition. As long as the guilds hold the keys to the mountain, women may be locked out of Ōminesanji, but there is no physical barrier preventing them from crossing into the bounded realm, and more than a few did precisely that.

Chapter Five:  
Crossing the Line

Women (and men) challenged Sanjōgatake's tradition of female exclusion in a steady stream throughout the twentieth century. The following pages introduce some of them in a series of vignettes. Their stories, each very different, touch upon a diverse range of topics from sport climbing to spirit mediums. They allow us to observe in dynamic detail how an ancient religious tradition is contested in various contemporary milieus, while shedding light on women's agency and identity in an ideological system that demands their silence and invisibility.

Ms. Alps and the “Thieves’ Visits”

Following the Meiji government edict that abolished female exclusion in 1872 (see chapter two), we know very little about religious life at Ōminesan as it concerned women for some five decades. From around the turn of the twentieth century, we can begin to supplement hearsay with news media archives, which track significant events at Yoshino, Dorogawa, and Ōminesan with considerable regularity from 1880. Media coverage alone is not an entirely reliable means of evaluating this period of the mountain's history, but it can provide clues.<sup>1</sup> I have been unable to locate verifiable records concerning women at the mountain until 1929. At least two exceptions to this silence are worth noting in brief, although both are based on hearsay accounts. The first is a 1902 account of the daughter of a Katsuragi 葛城 shrine official attempting

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<sup>1</sup> The first documentable controversy at the mountain concerned a debate in Dorogawa over the public revelation of a hidden En no Gyōja image in 1902. “En no Gyōja dekaichō no fungi” 役行者出開帳の紛議, *Ōsaka Asahi shinbun*, April 14, 1902.

to climb Sanjōgatake with two male Buddhist clerics.<sup>2</sup> The second concerns two female schoolteachers attempting to climb the peak in male garb on July 24, 1915, and being turned away at the Dorogawa trailhead.<sup>3</sup>

We obtain the first clear evidence of women crossing into Sanjōgatake's restricted realm in 1929, at the height of the mountain's regular climbing season.

Appearing in the *Ōsaka Asahi shinbun* was the headline:

Female Prohibition Lifted, First Women Climb

Temple Keeper And Loggers Fear Wrath

Conquering Yamato's Sacred Peak Ōminesan<sup>4</sup>

女人禁制解かれて初めて婦人登山

堂守や樵夫が崇りを恐れ

大和の霊大峰山征服

Two women from Osaka, Okada Matsue 岡田松江 (age 22) and Ishiwatai Hiya 石渡秀 (age 39), appear in a photograph alongside the text, wearing kimono and holding bamboo hats and walking sticks (Figure 5.1). According to the article, the women set out by car with Itami Eisuke 伊丹栄助, also from Osaka, two days earlier. They

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<sup>2</sup> The 1902 account is widely cited in previous scholarship, yet difficult to substantiate. Yokoi Kakujiō 横井鶴城 notes the incident in passing in the *Sangaku ryokō annai* 山岳旅行案内, as cited in Miyake, *Ōmine Shugendō no kenkyū*, 440. The incident is also mentioned without citation in *Shin jidai* (p. 108) and by Morinaga Masao 森永雅世, “Kindai no ‘Ōminesan’ no ‘nyonin kinsei’ ni wa, donoyōna koto ga okotta no deshōka” 近代の「大峰山」の「女人禁制」には、どのようなことがおこったのでしょうか in “*Nyonin kinsei*” Q&A 「女人禁制」 Q&A, edited by Minamoto Junko 源淳子, 136–140 (Osaka: Kaihō Shuppansha, 2005), 140.

<sup>3</sup> Morinaga cites this as an oral record, 140.

<sup>4</sup> “Nyonin kinsei tokarete hajimete fujin tozan, dōmori ya kikori ga tatari o osore, Yamato no reihō Ōminesan seifuku” 女人禁制解かれて初めて婦人登山、堂守や樵夫が崇りを恐れ、大和の霊峯大峯山征服, *Ōsaka Asahi shinbun* 大阪朝日新聞, July 17, 1929.

drove along the Yoshino River to Kashiwagi, south of Sanjōgatake, and set out in the morning on a trail made by Itami earlier that year. The party reached Ozasa inside the restricted zone at three in the afternoon. An elderly male temple keeper took note, and although surprised he offered them refreshments, including the local specialty, arrowroot tea. A group of loggers in the area also noticed. They reprimanded the women for their intrusion and told them to descend immediately, lest they experience the wrath of the mountain's gods. The women complied, but not before signing their names on a "Female Exclusion Mountain Climbing Commemoration" (*Nyonin kinsei tozan kinen* 女人禁制登山記念) hung later in the hall.

In the 1933 mountaineering bulletin *Sangaku ryokō annai* 山岳旅行案内, Yokoi Kakujō 横井鶴城 states, "it was a mountain off-limits to women for a long time, but was regrettably conquered [by two women last summer]" (*ōkoyori nyonin kinsei no yama de atta ga, seifuku sera rete shimatta* 往古より女人禁制の山であったが、征服せられてしまった).<sup>5</sup> Zenitani, former Ryūsenji parishioner representative, notes that in Dorogawa this type of act is known as a "thieves' visit" (*nusutto mairi* ぬすつと参り).<sup>6</sup> In addition to being called thieves, trespassing women are sometimes known by a nickname with a more positive connotation: "Ms. Alps" (*Arupusu san* アルプスさん). "Alps" implies recreational climbers, as opposed to religious ascetics. Off-season female climbers, it seems, are either officially ignored or unofficially acknowledged as recreational climbers (who can be male or female) vis-à-vis religious climbers (who must be male).

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<sup>5</sup> Cited in Makita Mitsumasa 牧田満政, "Ōminesan ni nobotta josei" 大峰山に登った女性, *Ashinaka* あしなか 31, no. 3 (1956): 14.

<sup>6</sup> Zenitani, "Kono mama ni shitete hoshii," 98.

From late September until early May the following year, Sanjōgatake is for all intents and purposes closed. The mountaintop temple is locked, keys safeguarded by guilds in Osaka and Sakai. Temple lodges and teahouses are deserted, and the trails are generally empty. For women who dare, however, this is prime time to climb the forbidden peak. It is no secret that women sometimes climb Sanjōgatake during the off-season. One elder in Dorogawa recalled seeing many women inside the restricted area during his time as mountain guide. He passed them in silence on the trail, focusing on the tasks at hand—making multiple journeys per day to the summit, carrying supplies or leading guests—rather than causing trouble for the women.<sup>7</sup> Others were not so gracious, as demonstrated by the example given above of loggers threatening kimono-wearing female transgressor with otherworldly fury.

In the eyes of temple authorities, devotees, and local communities, women who make unauthorized climbs are not legitimate patrons of the mountain. Their transgressions therefore do not compromise the sacredness of Ōminesan. They also do little to challenge the mountain’s religious ban on women entering Sanjōgatake. As explained by Zenitani, “since it is impossible to tell by clothing alone if a person wearing, for example, a red parka is a man or a woman at this time [i.e., during the off-season], if someone just decides to climb, they can climb as much as they like, but this will not lead to the lifting the ban.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Personal communication, September 23, 2015.

<sup>8</sup> Zenitani, “Kono mama ni shitete hoshii,” 98. Original text reads: “konogoro wa akai yakke nado o kite ite, fukusō o mita dakede wa otokodearu ka onna dearu ka wakarimasenkara, noborou to omoeba, nanbo demo noboremasuga, sorede wa nyonin kaihō ni wa naranai nodesu” このごろは赤いヤッケなどを着ていて、服装を見ただけでは男であるか女であるかわかりませんから、登ろうと思えば、なんぼでも登れますが、それでは女人解放にはならないのです。

Yamada Narao 山田奈良雄, president of the Nishinomiya Yamato Club (*Nishinomiya no yamato kurabu* 西宮市の山徒倶楽部) claimed to have made several off-season climbs at Ōminesan with women in the late 1930s, which are noted in the mountaineering journal *Gakujin jihō* 岳人時報. It states that Yamada climbed Sanjōgatake twice in 1937, one time each in September and November, accompanied by a woman.<sup>9</sup> Another headline stated, “Narao and Itō (Namikawa) Nobuko descend Ōminesan Gyojagaeridake in September 1937, Becoming a Pioneer in Female Climbing at Ōmine” (*Narao to itō [namikawa] nobuko to ōminesan gyōjagaeridake ni ori, Ōmine nyonin tozan no sakigake o nasu* 昭和十二年九月奈良雄・伊藤 [並川] のぶ子と大峰山行者還岳に下り、大峰女人登山の魁をなす).

According to Makita Mitsumasa’s 牧田満政 1956 article, “Ōminesan ni nobotta josei” 大峰山に登った女性 (“Women who climbed Ōminesan”) in the journal *Ashinaka* (あしなか, *Straw Sandals*), Dorogawa authorities officially deny the existence of these 1937 incidents.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, local people often reason that these things slip under the radar since the mountain is not well traveled in winter months.

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<sup>9</sup> “Women’s mountain climbing resolve, accompanying women to the female prohibited Ōminesan twice in September and November” (*Shōwa jū ni nen ku gatsu, jūichi gatsu no nikai nyonin kinsei no Ōminesan ni josei o tomonai nyonin tozan kekkō* 昭和十二年九月・十一月の二回女人禁制の大峰山に女性を伴い女人登山決行), *Gakujin jihō* 岳人時報, 1937.

<sup>10</sup> In a letter to Makita, portions of which are transcribed in the article, Yamada explained, “those mountain entrances were all outside the open season or off the ascetic route. If women are unreasonably forcing entrance during the open season, insisting without knowing the stubborn local character, there is potential for injury” (*sono iriyama wa subete kaisan-ki igai, moshikuwa, gyōja-ji igai. kaisan-ki ni muri ni josei ga oshiirou to sureba, ganmeikorō no jimotomin no seikaku o shiranai de murijii suru no wa mubōdeari, shōgai jiken ni hatten suru kanōsei mo aru* 今更登山の見地からならば、女性登山など問題じゃない...ただし、その入山は総て開山期以外、もしくは、行者路以外。開山期に無理に女性が押し入ろうとすれば、頑迷固陋の地元民の性格を知らないで無理強いするのは無謀であり、傷害事件に発展する可能性もある). Makita, “Ōminesan ni nobotta josei,” 14.

Whether they are officially acknowledged or not, the records of Yamada's climbs with women offer a fascinating glimpse of the elusive Ms. Alps.

It is impossible to estimate with any certainty how many or what kind of women have climbed Sanjōgatake. This is to be expected, as Japan stands in many popular and academic perceptions as a “shame culture.”<sup>11</sup> As explained by Usui Atsuko 薄井篤子, scholar of women and Japanese religions, in the 1990s parents organized in protest of Osaka-area middle schools that organized yearly summer field trips to Ōminesan (leading the boys to Sanjōgatake and the girls to Inamuragatake) for instructing students on the merits of female exclusion.<sup>12</sup> Along with “tradition is important” and “Ōminesan is a sacred site,” students heard statements such as, “until now there have been female climbers as well, but no one reveals themselves because they have a guilty conscience,” and, “no one knows what became of the women who climbed.”<sup>13</sup>

It may be difficult to uncover information on female climbers, but Minamoto Junko, researcher at the Institute of Human Rights Studies at Kansai University and a strong advocate for lifting the ban, interviewed four Japanese women who climbed Sanjōgatake and published portions of the interviews in her 2011 article, “Otoko ga tsukutta shinwa ‘nyonin kinsei’—‘Ōminesan’ ni nobotta josei no intabyū kara” 男がつくった神話「女人禁制」—「大峰山」に登った女性のインタビューから

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<sup>11</sup> Ruth Benedict's *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (Houghton Mifflin, 1946) is the most well known Western study of Japan's culture of shaming, and has generated a large body of critical literature.

<sup>12</sup> Usui, “Tojiru seichi, aku seichi,” 207.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. Original text reads: “Ima made nobotta josei mo iru kedo, dare mo kōgai shinai, kokoro ni yamashii mono ga aru kara” 今まで登った女性もいるけど、誰も口外しない、心にやましいものがあるから; and “Nobotta joseitachi ga sonoato dōnatta no ka wakaranai” 登った女性たちがその後どうなったのか分からない。

(“A Man-made myth—from interviews with women who climbed “Ōminesan”).<sup>14</sup> Minamoto’s four interviewees climbed Sanjōgatake from different trailheads (Bridge of Great Purity and Lotus Crossing) and at different times of year (both within and outside the normal climbing season). The women, all born and raised in Nara Prefecture, had been warned since childhood that crossing into Sanjōgatake’s bounded realm was a transgression or a taboo, and that climbing would cause cataclysms by the jealous female mountain deity. One woman who was joined by her daughter did not think she would be physically capable of summiting the peak, and did not breathe easily until she descended. Another earnestly pondered whether her climbing would cause misfortunes. The third woman expected she would be fine, but nevertheless chose to conceal her journey from her family until she safely returned. The fourth interviewee’s emotions were a blend of fear and excitement.

The female pilgrims noted the mountain’s scenic beauty and the steepness of the trail. One woman recalled being kindly greeted by passersby. Another remembered hushed voices asking her why she was there and telling her that she was sullyng a 1300-year-old tradition.<sup>15</sup> Overall, the women described their experience at Sanjōgatake as a beautiful but challenging hike, and they reflected on female exclusion as a man-made tradition that has been perhaps overly aggrandized in popular perceptions.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Minamoto Junko 源順子, “Otoko ga tsukutta shinwa ‘nyonin kinsei’—‘Ōminesan’ ni nobotta josei no intabyū kara” 男がつくった神話「女人禁制」—「大峰山」に登った女性のインタビューから, *Buraku kaihō* 部落解放 647 (2011): 86–93.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>16</sup> Given the general thrust of Minamoto’s research on Ōminesan and female exclusion, which views the phenomenon as a form of illegal gender discrimination, I caution the reader against drawing overarching conclusions from these interviews, which like many studies reflects its author’s personal agenda.

## American Woman

The most famous (or infamous, depending on one's perspective) woman to attempt to climb Sanjōgatake in the twentieth century is an American from the Natural Resources section of the Occupying Forces' press corps.<sup>17</sup> The story begins one year after Japan was defeated in World War II. On July 12, 1946, Matsuyama Keikichi 松山啓吉, member of the Occupying Forces Service (*Shinchūgun* 進駐軍勤務) and founder of the Kinki Alpine Club (*Kinki tozan kyōkai* 近畿登山協会) set out for Sanjōgatake with a group of thirty people that included women and several press agents. At Kashiwagi, on the eastern side of Sanjōgatake in the Kawakami region (see Figure 1.7) Matsuyama by chance met an American woman who had been staying at the same inn. He invited her to join the climb, along with her female interpreter. Matsuyama told her that the ban on women would be lifted the following day.

Word of Matsuyama and his group spread to Dorogawa, and at midnight the town siren was sounded and about three hundred men (one from each household, Zenitani notes) crossed the mountain to Kashiwagi to stop them. Local people became so agitated that ward headman Yagitani Yasujirō 柳谷安次郎 was forced to discourage violent behavior three times during the night. At nine in the morning, the two parties met at Ozasa and a heated debate ensued.

“Japan has lost the war, everything has changed,” Matsuyama insisted. “Men and women are equal. Should we not then open the Ōminesan for women? We must stop the ban!” The angry mob from Dorogawa, answered: “We know that we have

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<sup>17</sup> Zenitani's eyewitness account, although subjective, provides the background for the following presentation. Zenitani, “Kono mama ni shitete hoshii,” 86–101. I also consulted his “*Ōminesan nyonin kaihō tsuioku ki*” 大峰山女人解放問題追憶記, *Jinben* 神変 704 (1970): 37–44. Zenitani's account has been widely repeated by other scholars, often without citation. I referenced other sources where available, and note them throughout.

lost the war and become a free country, but we also have freedom of belief in Japan and belief in any religion should be allowed. Ōminesan is a mountain that has protected a more than 1300-year-old tradition of not allowing entry by women, and we cannot let this belief be destroyed.”<sup>18</sup>

Neither party would back down, so five people from each side were appointed to meet and talk. Zenitani, who represented Dorogawa and Ryūsenji, led negotiations. He explained that women’s exclusion was unrelated to gender discrimination, but rather a pillar of belief for some one million devotees who use the mountain as a training site and whose patronage supports the lives of local residents.

The American woman remained unconvinced, declaring that if her climbing Ōminesan would “make Japanese women happy” she would push through.<sup>19</sup> Zenitani retorted that the mountain’s ban on women was similar to the idea of a cloister in Christianity. “Do you not also have in America places where men are not allowed to

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<sup>18</sup> Zenitani’s paraphrasing: Matsuyama group: “Nihon wa sensō ni makete, subete ga kawatta noda. Danjo wa byōdōdearu. Dakara ōminesan mo josei ni kaihō shite yarubekidewanai ka. Kaihō sasenakereba, ikan”日本は戦争に負けて、全てが変わったのだ。男女は平等である。だから大峰山も女性に解放してやるべきではないか。解放させなければ、いかん。Dorogawa group: “Sensō ni makete jiyūna kuni ni natta to iu koto wa wakarimasukeredomo, Nihon ni mo shinkōnojiyū o iu mono ga arimasu. Donna shūkyō o shinkō suru koto mo yurusarete iru hazudesu. Ōminesan wa josei o hairenai to iu koto de 1300-nen mo no dentō o mamotte kita yamadeari, kono shinkō o kuzusu wake ni wa ikimasen”戦争に負けて自由な国になったということはわかりますけれども、日本にも信仰の自由をいうものがあります。どんな宗教を信仰することも許されているはずですよ。大峰山は女性を入れないということで1300年もの伝統を守ってきたやまであり、この信仰を崩すわけにはいきません。Ibid., 86–88.

<sup>19</sup> “Watashi ga ōminesan ni noboru koto ni yotte, Nihon no josei ga kōfuku ni naru nonara watashi wa noborimasu”わたしが大峰山に登ることによって、日本の女性が幸福になるのなら私は登ります。Ibid., 89.

enter?” Zenitani questioned. “Are not only women allowed to practice in those places?”<sup>20</sup> To this, Zenitani added:

Thanks to the good will of American Occupation Forces, Japan welcomed peace. There are close to one million devotees at this mountain, and those devotees will get very angry at the loss of the place for their ascetic training because of women climbing the mountain.

Might they not turn [their anger] toward the women who climbed here today? And, just that, for that reason, will incite a religious uprising.”<sup>21</sup>

Zenitani later admitted that his final crescendo was exaggerated, but in any case, the woman yielded at this point, and was persuaded not to climb. The confrontation lasted about an hour.

Another version of the story accentuates the American woman’s individual agency and defiant attitude, leaving out both Matsuyama and Zenitani.<sup>22</sup> According to the travel writer Okada Kishū, the young American woman often entered mountain areas for survey work. On one occasion, she met a young woman from Osaka at Kashiwagi, and together they decided to climb Sanjōgatake. A group of local

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<sup>20</sup> “Amerika ni mo danshi kinsei no basho ga arude wa arimasen ka” アメリカにも男子禁制の場所があるではありませんか; “Are wa josei dake ga shugyō shite iru bashodeshou” あれは女性だけが修行している場所でしょう。 Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> “Nihon wa senryō-gun no gokōi ni yotte heiwa ga kimashita. Kono yama ni wa hyaku man-ri chikai shinja-san go orimasu. Sono shinja-san wa, josei ga kono yama ni noboru koto ni yotte, jibun-tachi no shugyō no basho o ushinatta to iu koto de hijō ni okorimasu. Sono ikari o, kyō nobotte kita josei no hito ni mukete kurudeshou. Soshite, sore nomi ka, sonotame ni, shūkyō-tekina bōdō ga okorimasu” 日本は占領軍のご好意によって平和がきました。この山には百万人近い信者さんごおります。その信者さんは、女性がこの山に登ることによって、自分たちの修行の場所を失ったということで非常に怒ります。その怒りを、きょう登って来た女性の人に向けてくるでしょう。そして、それのみか、そのために、宗教的な暴動が起こります。 Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Okada, “Nyonin kinsei yuragu Ōminesan,” 126–127.

mountain men blocked their attempt, and the two sides debated for three hours. The American woman did not understand the Japanese explanations, but was convinced after hearing comparisons to Christianity.

Dorogawa local historian Kyōtani contributed a third perspective, stressing that the American woman did not know the circumstances at the mountain and did not set out to break the barrier. According to Kyōtani, when the situation was explained, she quietly went down the mountain.<sup>23</sup>

What transpired next is not disputed. The headman of Tenkawa Village, Masutani Genzō 榎谷源造, and Ōminesan devotee representative Miyata Kanetoshi 宮田金寿 reported the incident to the Nara prefectural government, which was at that time under Occupation control. In response, they received a notice from Lieutenant Colonel S. Henderson that was then posted in English and Japanese at each climbing entrance, the Japanese portion of the notice carved on a wooden board.<sup>24</sup> I present it here in its original form:

The traditions of this shrine are over 1200 years old and are in effect that no woman has ever been able to visit herein. In recognizing the religious rites this country all occupational personnel are enjoined to observe this tradition.

Shrines and Temple Section

Nara Military Government Team.

Roland S. Henderson St. Colnel

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<sup>23</sup> Kyōtani, interview, August 2, 2015.

<sup>24</sup> On October 26, 1948, the Yoshino headman was repeatedly asked by Kizō'in on behalf of Ōminesanji to confirm whether there were discrepancies between the English and Japanese. According to Shudō, and I agree, this record (held in Kizō'in archives) likely indicates that female prohibition became an even more pressing matter after the War. Shudō, *Kinpusenji*, 271.

Commanding Nara Military Gov. Team.

*Women's prohibition [sic]*

*Ōminesanji ha sen sanbyaku nen ijō women's prohibition no dentō o  
kakushu shi kono yama no shinkō o hoji shitaru koto o mitome, wareware  
senryō-gun ha nihon shūkyō no kenri to dentō o sonchō surumononari  
Nara ken gunsei-bu*

*Jinja jiin-ka rikugun chūsa*

*S. Henderson'*

女人禁制

大峰山寺ハ千三百年以上、女人禁制ノ伝統ヲ確守シ、此山ノ信仰  
ヲ保持シタル事ヲ認メ、吾々 占領軍ハ日本宗教ノ権利ト伝統ヲ尊  
重スルモノナリ

奈良県軍政部

神社寺院課 陸軍中佐

エス・ヘンダーソン.<sup>25</sup>

Today, the “American Woman Incident” is by far the most popular story of a woman flouting the ban and attempting to climb Sanjōgatake. This is not surprising, given the circumstances—it occurred directly after the War, a foreigner was involved, and the entire town of Dorogawa was up in arms.

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<sup>25</sup> Reproduced from Shudō, who consulted the original text (English and Japanese) in Ryūsenji archives (ibid.). It bears noting that this was not the first time Ōminesan authorities sought Occupying Forces assistance. Ryūsenji's head priest at the time, Okada Kaigyoku 岡田戒玉 previously sought the Lieutenant Colonel's support. Personal communication, Dorogawa, May 4, 2015.

## Spirit Mediums and Sushi

Post-War Sanjōgatake attempts by women—both solo climbs and climbs by groups led by men and accompanied by women, as was more often the case—steadily increased, undoubtedly encouraged by a new constitution that guaranteed gender equality. In terms of solo attempts, I offer two examples here. Despite Lt. Col. Henderson’s official wood-carved warning, two Japanese women—a spirit medium from Shikoku and the proprietor of a sushi restaurant from Osaka—attempted to climb Sanjōgatake in 1947 and 1948, respectively. Zenitani, who again assumed the role of negotiator on both occasions, recounted the incidents.

In 1947, a woman known only as Ogamiya おがみ屋 arrived alone in Dorogawa from Shikoku. By Zenitani’s account a zealous ascetic, Ogamiya claimed that an oracle appeared during ascetic training at Ishizuchisan 石鎚山 in Shikoku and instructed her to climb Ōminesan. She traveled as far as Dorogawa, where she met Zenitani (it is unclear who prompted the meeting). He explained to her the principles of Ōminesan Shugendō and its founder En no Gyōja. Zenitani’s appeals to religious tradition and the mountain’s devotees did little to convince Ogamiya, who was intent on climbing. Then, suddenly, she fell into a trancelike state, later claiming to be possessed by the spirit of En no Gyōja, who directed her to leave the mountain at once. She promptly departed.

Another woman came to Dorogawa the following year from Osaka. She was known as “Jojiirō chō” 女次朗長 (legal name Hashimoto Hisa 橋本久), referencing her occupation as the proprietor of Jirō chō Sushi 次朗長鮓. Hashimoto heard of the strict policy against women at the mountain and was determined to experience it for herself. On October 13, 1948, Hashimoto set out for the Ōminesan range accompanied by three men, including one Buddhist cleric. She dressed in drag. At

three in the morning, the group set out from their Kashiwagi lodge, claiming to be bound for Ōdaigahara in the opposite direction of Sanjōgatake. Someone in Kashiwagi caught on to their true intentions, and signaled to Dorogawa. The town siren sounded, women prepared boxed lunches, and eighty men set out in the rain for Kashiwagi. For local people, rain was regarded as a sign that a woman had entered the mountain and angered the female mountain god.

The two parties met at Obatani Nozoki 伯母谷覗 between Kashiwagi and Waki no shuku 脇の宿 (station 64) and talks commenced. This time, Zenitani opted for a slightly different approach. He began by inquiring whether Hashimoto hiked the mountain and sought to break the rule for reasons pertaining to belief or simply self-promotion. Hashimoto insisted it was belief drawing her toward Sanjōgatake. Zenitani thus continued with his now-practiced oration on Ōminesan's 1300-year succession of devotees since the time of En no Gyōja. Hashimoto eventually consented to head down the mountain, but on the condition that if and when women were welcomed at Sanjōgatake she would be the first to climb it. Dorogawa headman Ōta Tatsuzō 太田辰造 agreed and even presented the woman with a statue of En no Gyōja passed down in his family. They agreed that she would return the statue if the rule was lifted. Ōta also asked Hashimoto to dissuade any woman trying to enter the bounded realm thereafter. Both parties signed a written agreement, then lit it on fire to seal the deal.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> I also consulted Ashitate Ken'ichi 足立巻一, "Ōnna yamabushi no shutsugen shita Ōminesan" 女山伏の出現した大峰山, *Shūkan kouron* 週刊コウロン 2, no. 29 (1960): 28–31. One year later, a man named Sugita Shōryū 杉田昭竜 reportedly climbed Sanjōgatake with a woman. Sugita originally considered breaking the restriction with Jojirō chō the year before, but they competed with each other as to who would succeed first. The September 3, 1948 *Ōsaka Asahi shinbun* featured Sugita, who declared he would be first. Jojirō chō apparently panicked and took the initiative. Itō, "Ōminesan no nyonin kinsei," 35.

From Tokyo via Manaslu

On May 9, 1956, a Japanese expedition led the inaugural summit of Manaslu in the Himalayas, one of the world's fourteen mountain peaks above 8,000 meters. Inoue Yasushi's 井上靖 wildly popular novel about mountain climbing, *Hyōheki* 氷壁 (*Ice Wall*), hit bookstands the same year. These two events drew great attention to Japan's mountains, inciting a nationwide climbing boom.

From the mid-1950s, unprecedented numbers of climbers, male and female, flocked to Japan's mountains. Women could and did climb higher peaks in the Ōminesan range, such as Hakkyōgatake and Inamuragatake, but the existence of an elusive, inaccessible sacred peak drew great attention to Sanjōgatake. It also inspired a Tokyo man to lead a crusade against Ōminesan with the intention of breaking the mountain rule against women.

When the Kantō Mountaineering League (*Kantō sangaku renmei* 関東山岳連盟) held their annual climbing festival on March 20, 1956, at Mount Shirane (*Shiranesan* 白根山) in the Nikkō area to the northeast of Tokyo, the board chairman of the All-Japan Mountaineering League (*Zenkoku sangaku renmei* 全国山岳連盟) Takahashi Sadamasa 高橋定昌 declared that it was “inconvenient that today there are mountains women must not climb” (*imadoki, josei no noborenu yama ga aru to ha futsugō* いま時、女性の登れぬ山があるとは不都合だ). Apparently inspired by Takahashi's remarks, Yamamoto openly questioned the propriety of National Park land being off-limits to women in the club's newspaper, *Mame shinbun* 豆新聞.<sup>27</sup>

In June 1956, one month after the Manaslu summit, Yamamoto Satoshi 山本 僭 of Tokyo's Climbing and Ski Promotion Club (*Tozan to sukii fukyū kai* 登山とス

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<sup>27</sup> Makita, “Ōminesan ni nobotta josei,” 13; Suzuki, *Nyonin kinsei*, 51.

キ一普及会) publicly called for a group to open Ōminesan to women. Yamamoto likened his campaign to the Japanese team at Manaslu, who conquered a previously forbidden peak. *Mainichi shinbun* was the first to report on Yamamoto's plan, running a headline in the morning edition of June 24, 1956 that proclaimed, "Brave Tokyo Women to Challenge Ōminesan, Nara Sacred Site."<sup>28</sup>

Yamamoto arrived in Dorogawa on July 2, accompanied by several club members and two young women. Yamamoto announced his plan to climb Sanjōgatake with the women. The team in the Himalayas overcame superstitions regarding mountain gods in Tibet, Yamamoto complained, but in Japan women were not even afforded the equality promised to them in the constitution. Yamamoto rejected the notion that Sanjōgatake was solely a site for religious training—any man was welcome to climb, regardless of religious inclinations.

Yamamoto met with Dorogawa mayor Okumura Suekichi 奥村末吉, Ryūsenji head priest Okada Kaiō, Kizō'in head priest Nakai Zenryū 中井禅隆, and other representatives of the Goji'in temples in Yoshino. Yamamoto roundly failed to convince the group, or residents in Dorogawa when he traveled there next. Ultimately, his campaign was a well-publicized failure. Nevertheless, Yamamoto did attempt to climb Sanjōgatake, accompanied by women, the following month. The group of six, including one woman from Kawakami 川上 on the east side of Sanjōgatake, approached Sanjōgatake on August 21 by way of Takahara 高原. A youth group in Takahara had apparently concocted a plan to establish this new route as a means of

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<sup>28</sup> "Yūkan na tōkyō no josei nara seiba, Ōminesan ni idomu" 勇敢な東京の女性奈良聖場・大峰山に挑む, *Mainichi shinbun* 毎日新聞, June 24, 1956. The story sparked great interest in the 1956 journalistic world, leading to new surveys and reports concerning female exclusion at Ōminesan and other sites. One entire edition of *Ashinaka* was devoted to the topic in 1956, and I have located nine major newspaper articles published between June and August that discuss the subject.

reviving the local community, and drew in Yamamoto for support. Dorogawa locals and devotees met the party and pushed them back from the seventh station (*shichigōme* 七合目). *Motomeru kai*'s website claims that over one thousand devotees and local residents gathered to prevent Yamamoto.<sup>29</sup> Upon returning to Dorogawa, Zenitani persuaded Yamamoto to leave. Yamamoto visited Dorogawa one more time, boasting that club newspapers were “selling like hotcakes” after his two attempts.<sup>30</sup> Yamamoto suggested to Zenitani the idea of bringing sponsorship deals to the mountain if women were allowed to climb Sanjōgatake. Zenitani refused and sent Yamamoto home with train fare.

### Crossing Over

When a group of thirty-five transsexuals set out to climb Sanjōgatake in November 2005, Dorogawa residents protested the climb, arguing that transgender issues did not exist during En no Gyōja's time but that their climb would disrespect the religious traditions of the mountain. Three members of the group forced their way to the summit. The incident was reported in a variety of media outlets, and also provoked widespread discussion on Internet message boards, particularly among Japanese youths in the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) community.<sup>31</sup>

Furthermore, when a group of teachers from Nara prefecture climbed Sanjōgatake in August 1999, contributing to the freezing of plans to open the mountain for En no Gyōja's 1300th Grand Death Anniversary celebrations (discussed in the previous chapter), priests at the mountaintop paused to debate whether one was

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<sup>29</sup> [http://www.on-kaiho.com/info/info\\_history.html](http://www.on-kaiho.com/info/info_history.html) (accessed November 2, 2015).

<sup>30</sup> Itō, “Ōminesan no nyonin kinsei,” 35.

<sup>31</sup> There is a rich body of online material on this topic that I hope to mine in future research.

a man or woman. The person in question was a Nara-area man in his sixties at the time who vocally (and visibly) opposed the mountain's ban on women. He said to the priests in falsetto, 'Does it matter if I'm a man or a woman?'"<sup>32</sup> For this climb and on other occasions, Yamaguchi disguised himself as a woman, donning a red suit belonging to his wife and borrowing her jewelry and makeup.

## Conclusions

The stories presented here attest to the fact that women and men regularly contest the mountain's boundary line, and at least one man's challenge led him to cross the line *as* a woman. Each transgression reinforces the notion that resistance is a natural corollary to rule. Modern inquisitions and attempts have sparked lively debate in the journalistic world, yet they did little to encourage policy change at the mountain, and in a cumulative sense they in fact seem to crystallize support for the ban. According to one innkeeper in Dorogawa, "it would take a superman to open the mountain to women."<sup>33</sup> Still, women play a far more active role at Ōminesan than the tagline "female exclusion" admits. Contrasting women's forbidden forays and their effects, the next chapter shifts focus to women's active and permitted religious practices at Ōminesan in the twentieth century.

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<sup>32</sup> Yumi Wijers-Hasegawa, "Kii Mountain Range Gambit: UNESCO heritage bid challenged over gender bias," *Japan Times*, May 1, 2004. Available at <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2004/05/01/national/unesco-heritage-bid-challenged-over-gender-bias/#.VIA66t8rL-Y> (accessed November 20, 2015).

<sup>33</sup> Personal communication, Dorogawa, September 22, 2014.

## Chapter Six:

### Beyond Exclusion

The twentieth century witnessed women being afforded new avenues of practice, women and men developing novel interpretations of ancient mountain motifs, and men allowing women new levels of inclusion in traditional practices. Ryūsenji, the Buddhist temple in Dorogawa that has served as part of Ōminesan's official managing body since the Meiji period, permitted women to enter its grounds and participate in ritual services for the first time. The temple also began offering female guide permits to Inamuragatake, a peak adjacent to Sanjōgatake sometimes referred to as "Women's Ōmine" (*Nyonin Ōmine* 女人大峯). A head priest of Ōminesanji, inspired by a dream, built a new training site for women near Kinpusenji. A woman's spiritual experience at Dainichisan and a man's meditative insight at Nanaosan led them to re-envision old mountain legends in new terms that embraced women's participation. Finally, Ōminesan's head Shugendō-affiliated Buddhist temples have opened new avenues of religious practice to women in recent decades, welcoming their participation in traditional rites for the first time. Each of the micro-narratives presented here reveals a different dimension of women's active engagement with the mountain and makes a meaningful statement about contemporary religion at Ōminesan. As a whole, they problematize the enduring perception, held in both scholarly and public opinions, that the mountain's sacred milieu is solely defined by male centric practice and ideology.

#### Opening the Dragon's Mouth

The legendary origins of Ryūsenji temple in Dorogawa trace back to the ascetic En no Gyōja and the Buddhist cleric Shōbō, as the reader will recall from chapter one. Amid ascetic forays in the mountain, En no Gyōja, the legendary founder of Shugendō, discovered a spring and

built a worship hall there dedicated to the Eight Great Dragon Kings. Some two hundred years later, Shōbō revived the practice at the site after vanquishing a big snake (or a male and female pair, according to one version). Since at least the Edo period, Ryūsenji has served as Sanjōgatake's ritual base. Men visiting for religious climbs to Sanjōgatake open and close ascetic practice by performing water ablutions in the emerald spring waters of its "Dragon's Mouth" (Figure 6.1).

Ryūsenji lies outside the traditional bounded realm, about a twenty-minute walk west from the Mother's Hall, which served as the boundary line until 1970 as discussed in chapter one (Figure 6.2), but women were actively denied access to temple grounds and ritual services until 1960. In addition to proscribing women's entry past the two main gates (Figures 6.3, 6.4), Ryūsenji also forbade passing in front of them. As indicated in Figure 6.5, women were forced onto steep mountain trails behind the temple in order to traverse the northern part of Dorogawa. Today, these paths are advertised as "nature trails" that connect tourist sites, but this is a recent reinterpretation. They were formerly known as "women's trails" (*nyonin michi* 女人道), which we find at other mountain sites formerly off-limits to women, such as Kōyasan, where a thirteen-kilometer trail winds around the town (see chapter two, "Receiving the Edict").

The initiative to open Ryūsenji was contingent upon several factors. The most significant, according to local people, was a great fire that ravaged Dorogawa on March 31, 1946. "That day I could never forget," Kyōtani of Dorogawa remarked, head hung low. Fueled by easily ignitable cedar-thatched roofs, flames hopped from building to building, destroying the temple's main halls, the head priest's living quarters, and most homes in town. Local parishioners, area devotees, and lay guilds donated generously to the subsequent restoration efforts. Women, comprising roughly half of these demographics, offered considerable assistance. The sentiment arose locally that women should be allowed inside for

the completion celebration, and thereafter for regular services and worship. An especially loud voice for change came from the Dragon King Guild (*Ryūō kō* 龍王講), a collective launched in the Meiji period under Ryūsenji's direct auspices. Some of its members complained with increasing vigor about women's inability to worship on temple grounds despite being active and paying members.

Proscribing women from passing the front gates posed a major inconvenience for local people also, one exacerbated during the fire restoration. For example, when women made deliveries of material and foodstuffs—Kizu gives the example of homemade tofu on cold mornings—receiving it required that a man not only travel to the temple gate but cross the river as well, since women could not approach the front road.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, groups of female devotees occasionally visited Ryūsenji to pay homage to the Eight Great Dragon Kings, yet because of restrictions they would gather and chant the *Heart Sutra* wherever they could in town, causing trouble for local people by stopping traffic and blocking roads.

Climbing activity steadily increased at Inamuragatake after Akai's trail was completed in the 1930s, and Ryūsenji decided to issue female guide permits (*onna sendatsu menkyoshō* 女先達免許証) for Inamuragatake Women's Trail Training (*Inamuragatake nyonin michi shugyō* 稲村ヶ岳女人道修行) from early 1960. Again, they were inconvenienced since female applicants could not enter temple grounds. Dorogawa town leaders took the initiative, since Ryūsenji was the town's parishioner temple. After deciding to open up to women, they called for Ōminesanji's cooperation and received no objection. Even the powerful guilds presented little resistance, granting Dorogawa permission on one condition: "Ryūsenji may open, but there is no way the same will happen at Ōminesan."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Kizu, *Nyonin kinsei*, 103.

<sup>2</sup> Zenitani, "Kono mama ni shitete hoshii," 101. Iwashina corroborates this. *Yama no minzoku*, 30.

Two days after the completion services for the fire restoration, which women were not allowed to attend, another ceremony was held to welcome women inside Ryūsenji.

On July 10, 1960, around two hundred women lined up in front of the eighteenth-century stone pillar that stated, “From here [onward] women not permitted to enter” (*kore yori nyonin iru koto o yurusazu* 從是不許入女人, Figure 6.6).<sup>3</sup> Ryūsenji head priest Okada Kaiō formally declared that the temple would open to women, and then cut a red and white tape with a ritual blade and proceeded to lead female devotees into the grounds (the reader will recall from chapter one a similar series of events in the 1970 boundary reduction). At the main hall, Okada announced the welcoming of women in front of the main icon of Maitreya and offered incense. Jojirō chō 女次郎長, the Osaka woman who attempted to climb Sanjōgatake in 1947, was in the procession (see chapter five, “Spirit Mediums and Sushi”).<sup>4</sup> A banner draped over the main temple entrance proclaimed, “Celebrating Women’s Liberation” (*shū nyonin kaihō* 祝女人解放). A fireworks display concluded the day’s events.<sup>5</sup> It is relevant to note here that despite the celebratory pomp, it was rumored that the head priest receiving considerable criticism from local men and devotees regarding the moving of the stone and the lifting of the temple ban. One interviewee noted in addition that many local men scoffed at the act and did not participate in the opening ceremony. That said, an article appearing in *Tōkyō Asahi Shinbun* 東京朝日新聞 on July 11, 1960, titled “Drawing Down the Women’s Prohibition Monument” (*Nyonin kinsei hi, hikitaosu* 女人禁

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<sup>3</sup> The stone pillar was moved in 1980 to its current location, inside the temple walls near the women’s water ablution site (constructed in 1964).

<sup>4</sup> Jojirō chō did not bring the En no Gyōja image given to her by the Dorogawa ward headman, as noted in chapter five, since Sanjōgatake was still off-limits.

<sup>5</sup> “‘Nyonin kinsei’ kokonoka kagiri—senganbyakunen no dentō ni sayonara” 「女人禁制」九日限り一千三百年の伝統にさよなら, *Tōkyō Asahi shinbun* 東京朝日新聞, July 1, 1960.

制碑、ひき倒す), includes a grainy photograph of women standing around the fallen stone pillar, which had long stood at the temple's main gate, and by my count at least fifteen men in *yamabushi* attire standing beyond them.<sup>6</sup>

The Praying Mantis Cave upstream from Ryūsenji, reputed to be En no Gyōja's training grounds and the abode of the big snake that blocked his mother's passage and was then exterminated by Shōbō, was also officially opened to women in 1960. Furthermore, in 1964 Ryūsenji established a water ablution site for female practitioners (although it is regularly used by men as well) called the “Dragon King's Waterfall” (*Ryūō no taki* 龍王の滝) (Figures 6.7, 6.8). Around two hundred women gathered for its inaugural use on August 22 that year. The first to arrive this time was Sakai Hideko 酒井秀子, founder of a new religious group that worshiped Dainichi Buddha and made pilgrimages to Dainichisan 大日山, a small conical-shaped peak jutting out to the west and bearing a striking resemblance to a bundle of rice plants (Figure 1.22).

### The Palace Grounds

When Umiura Gikan 海浦義観 (1855–1921), a celebrated Buddhist priest and *yamabushi* of the Meiji period, hiked to Inamuragatake in 1909, he found its vistas and wildflowers so impressive as to be “difficult to describe in words” (*kotobo ni nobekataishi* 言語に述べ難).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> “‘Nyonin kinsei hi, hiki taosu,’ Ōminesan Ryūsenji no kaihō shiki 「女人禁制碑、ひき倒す」 大峯山竜泉寺の開放式, *Tōkyō Asahi shinbun* 東京朝日新聞, July 11, 1960.

<sup>7</sup> Umiura was instrumental in the establishment of the journal *Jinben* 神變, the monthly publication of the Honzan lineage of Shugendō. He often wrote under the pen name Chikusai Man of Leisure (*Chikusai kanjin* 竹斎閑人). Yanagita Kunio, founding father of folk studies in Japan, described Umiura as “a *yamabushi* unspoiled from the past” in the introduction to *Mutsu tsugaru fukaura enkakushi* 陸奥津軽深浦沿革誌 (1918). His travelogues are transcribed in Oda Masayasu 小田匡保, “Zasshi ‘Jinben’ keisai no Ōmine yon jū ni shuku

It was a sacred abode where immortals played and heavenly women danced, bringing rain to the valleys below. In terms of names, Inamuragatake (“Rice-plant Village Peak” 稲村ヶ岳) is a recent creation. In 1910, Umiura recorded the formal title as Inakuratake (“Rice-plant Storehouse Peak” 稲倉嶽, also written 稲蔵嶽) and noted Inamura (“Rice-plant Village” 稲邑) as slang. All of these variants refer to today’s Dainichisan a small conical-shaped peak jutting out to the west and bearing a striking resemblance to a bundle of rice plants (Figure 6.9, 6.10).

According to lore, people from the flat plains of Nara visited Dorogawa in times of drought to perform rainmaking rites at a small shrine dedicated to Dainichi Buddha (大日如来, Skt. Mahāvairocana). Some claimed that rain would surely fall if a person stood before the shrine with an iron sword, made offerings, and then brought the sword back to the village.<sup>8</sup> Another account, recorded in the nineteenth-century illustrated volume *Yoshinogun meizanzushi* 吉野郡名山図誌, noted rainmaking powers as being so potent at the peaks that worship on-site or looking out from Sanjōgatake was forbidden in order to prevent chaotic weather (ibid., 128). As Ryūsenji rose in prominence to be Dorogawa’s parishioner temple and Sanjōgatake’s ritual base, Inamuragatake’s rainmaking identity seems to have fallen into obscurity. Today, no one in Dorogawa seems to be able to explain why or when the name Inamuragatake came to signify only the broad summit. Local elders do note, however, that Inamuragatake was not a climbing destination for a very long time

Indeed, until a direct trail from Dorogawa was completed in the 1930s, Inamuragatake was not easily accessible by foot (the reader will recall from chapter one that reaching

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ichiran shiryō ni tsuite” 雑誌「神変」掲載の大峰四十二宿一覽史料について, *Chirigaku kenkyū* 地域学研究 16 (April 2003): 41–67.

<sup>8</sup> Kishida Sadao 岸田定雄, *Yamato shugendō Ōmine sanroku dorogawa no minzoku* 大和修験道大峯山麓洞川の民俗 (Nara: Toyozumi shoten, 1993), 127. Kishida’s local history of Dorogawa is based on archival research and conversations with elders.

Dorogawa alone was a formidable journey until the twentieth century). Sanjōgatake and Ozasa, both sites off-limits to women, served as primary access points to Inamuragatake before then. In 1909, for instance, Umiura described Inamuragatake as “a three *ri* [roughly twelve kilometers] trek *from Ozasa* to the southeast.”<sup>9</sup> It seems unlikely that Inamuragatake was ever well traveled by either male or female visitors.

Today, Inamuragatake can be accessed from two trailheads near Dorogawa. Akai’s 1930s trail begins east on the main road out of Dorogawa before one reaches the main Sanjōgatake trailhead. A small trail snakes to the right and into the mountains just past the base for the Goyomatsu Limestone Cave. A second trail begins just west of the Mother’s Hall further down the road and has become the standard point of access in recent years after severe winter storms damaged the other trail. Reaching the Mountain Top Crossing (Figure 6.10), the trail splits, one branch leading to Sanjōgatake via the Lotus Crossing, where the female boundary stands (Figure 6.11). Continuing further south along the ridgeline about twenty-minutes up a sharp slope, one reaches the broad summit of Inamuragatake, known as the Palace Grounds (*Goten yashiki* 御殿屋敷).

Inamuragatake emerged in recent decades as a popular day hike for visitors to the Dorogawa area, and it is occasionally known today by the nickname “Women’s Ōmine.” “Women’s Ōmine” seems to have entered the local vernacular from 1940, when a schoolteacher from Nara named Okumura Tsurumatsu 奥村鶴松 led a group of Sakai high school girls to the summit. The sale of female guide permits at Ryūsenji from 1960 certainly provided further encouragement.

Recent popular and academic accounts frame Inamuragatake as a religious training site for women that opened in 1960, implying that it, too, was off-limits to women. A popular online mountaineering website describes “Women’s Ōmine” in the following terms:

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<sup>9</sup> Oda, “Zasshi ‘Jinben’ keisai no Ōmine,” 14. My emphasis.

“Inamuragatake, situated on a southern ridgeline stretching to the west of Sanjōgatake, was a female-prohibited mountain like Sanjōgatake for a long time, but was liberated after along with the improved status of women post-War.”<sup>10</sup> Suzuki states that the “form of training” (*shugyō keitai* 修行形態) for couples visiting Dorogawa for the purpose of “worship climbs to Ōminesan” (*Ōminesan tohai* 大峯山登拝) consists of the man heading to Sanjōgatake and the woman heading to Inamuragatake.<sup>11</sup>

“Women’s Ōmine” clearly carries a religious connotation, referencing Ōmine Training and the religious ban on women, but whereas Sanjōgatake houses a mountaintop Buddhist temple and devotional sites along the trail, objects of devotion are nowhere to be found on Inamuragatake’s summit or paths. Rather than a veneration platform, a steel dais for viewing (*tenbōdai* 展望台) stands at Inamuragatake’s summit, offering visitors a 360-degree panoramic view of surrounding peaks (Figures 6.12, 6.13).

Inamuragatake certainly provides an alternative to Sanjōgatake that women (and men) actively pursue, but in my view the religious dimension of “Women’s Ōmine” is often exaggerated. It is difficult to reconcile the image of “Women’s Ōmine” (a religious training site for women) with the present-day reality of Inamuragatake (a popular day hike enjoyed by both men and women that does not feature worship facilities or implements). When asked about the sale of female guide permits to Inamuragatake, Ryūsenji head priest Okada paused for a moment, then replied, “hmm...I think...yes, not often, but it did happen.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> “Inamuragadake wa Sanjōgadake no nishigawa ni nobiru one no nanzō ni ichi shi, Sanjōgadake to dōyō ni nagai ma, nyoninkinzei no yamadattaga, sengo josei no chii kōjō to tomoni kaikin sareta” 稲村ヶ岳は山上ヶ岳の西側に延びる尾根の南方に位置し、山上ヶ岳と同様に永い間、女人禁制の山だったが、戦後女性の地位向上とともに解禁された。 Available online at <http://www.yamakei-online.com> (accessed October 27, 2015).

<sup>11</sup> Suzuki, *Nyonin kinsei*, 62.

<sup>12</sup> Okada, interview.

## Hell Valley

“Women’s Ōmine” has sometimes been considered a tactic to dissuade women’s repeated attempts to enter Sanjōgatake’s restricted area and as a byproduct of the longstanding rivalry between Yoshino and Dorogawa.<sup>13</sup> In terms of the former, Gojō Kakuchō 五條覚澄, founding abbot of Ōmine Shugenshū (renamed Kinpusen shugen honshū since 1952) on the Yoshino side, claims that Dorogawa and Ryūsenji began to advocate Inamuragatake as “Women’s Ōmine” from 1960 in order to prevent the Yoshino side from attracting more female visitors. On November 19, 1960, Gojō, then serving as head priest of Ōminesanji, established a religious training site for women on a steep slope west of Kinpusenji’s Zaō Hall (Figure 6.14).<sup>14</sup> He claimed to have been visited in a dream by a young woman who stood near a waterfall and told him to create a training site for women like one at Sanjōgatake.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, Gojō would later note, the number of female Shugendō devotees rose significantly after World War II but they did not have proper training grounds for ascetic practice.

Gojō chose a site known locally as “Hell Valley” (*Jigokudani* 地獄谷) or “Dark Valley” (*Kuraritani* 暗り谷), an eerie place most people dared not enter. It was here, during Yoshino’s short stint as the Southern Dynasty (*Nanboku-chō jidai* 南北朝時代, 1336–1392),

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<sup>13</sup> Pilgrimage is more than a religious exercise. It is also a political one. See anthropologists John Eade and Michael Sallnow, *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage* (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1991) for a comparative analysis of Christian pilgrimage that draws attention to the competition of meanings and practices between pilgrims and pilgrimage sites. In the case of Japan, I refer the reader to Ian Reader’s body of work on contemporary pilgrimage and Blair for Heian-period pilgrimage practices. See Reader, *Making Pilgrimages: Meaning and Practice in Shikoku* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2005).

<sup>14</sup> Gojō was founding abbot (*kanchō* 管長) of Ōmine Shugenshū 大峰修験宗, which in 1952 was renamed Kinpusen shugen honshū 金峯山修験本宗. This section draws from Gojō, “Jinsei ni ha kiseki ga aru” 人生には奇跡がある (“There is a Miracle in Life”), (Kinpusenji 金峰山寺, 1971), esp. 79–82; and fieldwork at the site.

<sup>15</sup> Sources do not specify, but this likely refers to a training site between Sanjōgatake and Ozasa called “Ako’s Waterfall” (*Ako no taki* 阿古の滝), a small waterfall that spills over a sheer cliff face.

that Prince Morinaga (*Norinaga shinnō* 護良親王, 1308–1355) is said to have tripped while walking along the rocks heading toward Kōyasan and fallen into the river far below.

The waterfall site drawn from Gojō's dream lies midway down a steep stone path leading from Kinpusenji to a riverside temple, Ryūō'in 龍王院, which is dedicated to the god Nōten Ōkami 脳天大神 who is said to offer protection from the neck up (Figure 6.15).<sup>16</sup> Because the waterfall often dried up in the summer, Gojō planned to construct a new waterfall, to which end he successfully sought donations from devotees. One day, just as it was completed, as Gojō descended the mountain he encountered along the way a large dying snake (more than two meters long), its head split and eyes protruding. With the help of neighborhood children, he moved the snake to a small cave alongside the river below and conducted a memorial service in its honor. The next day, when the opening of the "Gold Dragon King's Waterfall" (*Konryūō taki* 金龍王の滝) was to be held, the dead snake Gojō had seen with his own eyes was swimming around in the river, its head split. Every night thereafter, Gojō paid a visit to the big snake, which would appear with a distinctly split head. When he started chanting sutras, the snake vanished. Several days later, the snake that regularly appeared at night to Gojō summoned the priest to its cave, and relayed to Gojō that the power of words the priest chanted an incantation granted from Zaō Gongen relieved the snake from its suffering. Gojō enshrined the big snake at the riverside cave as Nōten Ōkami thereafter as a manifestation of Zaō Gongen charged with the power to heal, especially ailments from the neck up.

Ryūō'in functions as an active sector of Kinpusenji today, inviting both female and male visitors to descend the steep stone path to the riverside cave where Gojō enshrined a split-headed snake. The cave is a modern concrete structure, and an intricate piping system feeds the waterfall from the river. The legend of Gojō and the split-headed snake, less than

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<sup>16</sup> Gojō's water ablution site is dedicated to a deity called Iwamine Ōmikami 岩峯大神.

one hundred years old, has inspired a new era of modern religious practice in the greater Ōminesan area, one that is founded upon gender-inclusive terms. The story of Sakai Hideko at Dainichisan that follows provides another illustration of modern tradition making.

### The Heaven-sent Child of Dainichi

A small worship area stands at the summit of Dainichisan, the oddly shaped peak on the western edge of today's Inamuragatake known as a powerful site for rainmaking rituals (Figure 6.16). As I have explained, today's Inamuragatake refers denotes the broad summit. Both it and the rice-bundle shaped smaller peak fell out of favor at some point, much like the riverside Praying Mantis Cave. Sakai Hideko 酒井秀子 (1910–1996), an Osaka woman with family ties to Ryūsenji and Daigoji, hiked Dainichisan and returned claiming to have had a spiritual experience there. Sakai formed a new religious group thereafter dedicated to the worship of Dainichi Buddha and Ryūsenji's Eight Dragon Kings. Under the name Eight Great Teachings (*Hachi dai kyō* 八大教), Sakai and her devotees revived religious practice at Dainichisan in a manner that created a new outlet for women's worship at Ōminesan.<sup>17</sup>

Sakai was born in western Osaka in 1910, hailing from a family of ardent *yamabushi*. Her grandfather served in Katsuyamakō 勝山講, one of Ōminesan's guild, and her father Hidekichi 秀吉 was an enthusiastic devotee who participated yearly in the Flower-Offering Peak Entering Training (*Ōminesan hanaku nyūhō shugyō* 大峰山花供入峰修行) of

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<sup>17</sup> Itō's interview with the founder provides the basis for this summary. "Ōminesan no nyonin kinsei," 48–55. Suzuki re-presents Itō in *Nyonin kinsei*, 62–65. My coverage of Sakai and Eight Great Teachings here is limited, as the only source available is Itō's interview. While conducting fieldwork in Dorogawa I have been unable to find a single local person—even the current Ryūsenji head priest—with any knowledge of Sakai Hideko or Eight Great Teachings.

Daigoji's Sanbō'in.<sup>18</sup> Hidekichi began visiting Inamuragatake in 1907 in order to pray to Dainichi for a child, and after three years of worshipping there, Hideko was born. From infancy, she was revered as the "heaven-sent child (*mōshigo* 申し子) of Dainichi.<sup>19</sup> A self-described precocious child, Hideko was memorizing Buddhist scriptures by the age of two. Hidekichi brought his daughter to Dorogawa from a young age to accompany him on guild pilgrimages (although she traveled only as far as the Dorogawa inns). Hideko's mother was a zealous devotee of Ryūsenji's Eight Great Dragon Kings. She was also reputed to have supernatural abilities, which attracted a group of devotees to her. The family atmosphere was fervently religious, and yet Sakai claimed that she did not necessarily possess deep religious beliefs until much later in life.

In 1954, at the age of forty, Hideko was compelled to try climbing Dainichisan alone to confirm if she was indeed Dainichi's heaven-sent child. Setting out from Dorogawa in the middle of the afternoon, shrouded in white, she ascended the craggy peak. She was deeply moved upon finding the small Dainichi shrine donated by her now-deceased father. Hideko prostrated, chanting the *Heart Sutra* and praying for proof that she was Dainichi's gift. Suddenly, thick black smoke enshrouded her. Hideko shuddered in fear, and continued to pray. The experience granted Hideko the confirmation she sought, thus she began the descent to Dorogawa. It was dark, around eight or nine in the evening, but Hideko claimed that mysterious black and brown shaggy dogs guided her to places unknown throughout the night, and then secured her safe passage the next morning. She arrived in town the next morning.

Based on her spiritual experience at Dainichisan, Hideko began to attract followers, beginning with family members, and in 1959 she registered the group Eight Great Teachings. The name carries a double meaning, referring to the light of Dainichi spreading in eight

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<sup>18</sup> Every year in June, *yamabushi* gather at Sanbō'in in Kyoto and make a procession to Ōminesan to conduct ascetic training along the Okugake pilgrimage trail.

<sup>19</sup> Itō, "Ōminesan no nyonin kinsei," 49.

directions and also to Ryūsenji's Eight Great Dragon Kings.<sup>20</sup> In June 1986, Hideko received the status of Shugendō High Priest (*Shugendō dai sōzō* 修験道大僧正) from Sanbō'in and a dharma name, Shūjō 秀浄, the first of such honors bestowed on a woman. Hideko died on August 30, 1996 at the age of 87.

Hideko claimed to be able to heal various ailments through the supernatural power of Dainichi, but her teachings also drew heavily from the Shingon tradition of Daigoji. The Eight Great Dragon Kings, viewed as manifestations of Dainichi, formed the group's main object of worship. Eight Great Teachings also held strict views toward blood and death pollution. Menstruating women and women who had given birth in the past year, as well as those who had lost a relative within the preceding three months or a close relative within a year, were not allowed to participate in pilgrimage to Dainichisan, lest those impurities cause incident on the mountain. According to the founder, after a female teacher fell to her death on the mountain, it was later discovered at Dorogawa inn where she lodged that the woman had consumed meat and had also been menstruating the day before she climbed. For Sakai Hideko, the gods detested blood (she claimed to have entered menopause at the age of forty following her spiritual experience on Dainichisan). Finally, she believed that Sanjōgatake should in theory be opened, but women would be physically unable to climb it.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> An anonymous 1960 article states that Sakai's climb contributed to the ongoing debate by Sanjōgatake affiliates concerning opening Ryūsenji. "Kinsei no yama wa sude ni nyonin ga nobotteita" 禁制の山はすでに女人が登っていた ("Women had already been climbing restricted mountains"), *Shūkan gendai* 週刊現代 2, no. 30 (1960): 37.

<sup>21</sup> Reflecting on the interview, Itō wondered whether Sakai felt pressured by the interview to stay within the "official line" of the mountain concerning its ban on women. In any case, it is unclear what became of Eight Great Teachings and why Dorogawa local people today are either unable or unwilling to discuss the group or its founder.

## Big Snake's Lair

If there is indeed a “Women's Ōmine” to speak of today, the “Big Snake's Lair” (*Ja no kura* 蛇の蔵) at Nanaosan is it. Fifteen minutes east from the center of Dorogawa by foot along a cedar-lined road, the trailhead for Nanaosan begins, unmistakably marked by bright, abundant signage and a large, newly constructed wooden gate that leads to a worship hall (Figure 1.16). This is the headquarters of Dorogawa's thriving new religious group.<sup>22</sup> According to Nanaosan legend, when Shōbō expelled a pair of male and female big snakes (Ryūsenji and Hokkakuji versions of the legend claim he battled a single snake; see chapter 1) from the Praying Mantis Cave below, the male perished but the female fled to Nanaosan and was long forgotten.<sup>23</sup>

Dorogawa resident Yamaguchi Shinchoku 山口神直 (1928–; his legal name is Yamaguchi Mikio 山口神酒夫, but he is known to devotees as “Shinchoku-sensei”) claimed to have a spiritual experience during a religious pilgrimage to Shikoku in 1952. An oracle told him to open the cave at the top of Nanaosan and make it an ascetic training site, so Yamaguchi made a trail to the top, entered the cave, and began to worship Maō Dairei Daigongen 摩王大靈大権現.<sup>24</sup> One year later, in 1953, Yamaguchi had gathered followers

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<sup>22</sup> This section draws on my fieldwork at Nanaosan between March 2014 and September 2015. I participated in mountain opening and closing rites, and was on occasion welcomed to special gatherings of inner circle of members. Where noted, I draw from other sources to supplement.

<sup>23</sup> During one visit to Nanaosan, a group elder offered me a private tour of the new structure. Leading me up a small stairway, the man revealed with great enthusiasm a room above the entrance where the two gate pillars rise up as intricately carved male and female dragons. Commemorative plaques and lanterns lined the rooms. He made sure to point out that his name adorned the largest lantern.

<sup>24</sup> According to members, the name “Maō” carries the dual meaning of either true king or true devil. The same god is worshipped at Mount Kurama (*Kuramayama* 鞍馬山) to the north of Kyoto. Maō Gongen is the group's main object of worship, revered as the guardian deity of all things and all spirits on earth. The natural white stones appearing ubiquitously along the path to the Inner Precinct were, according to devotees, raised up from the sea floor

and officially registered the group Shugen setsuritsu konpon dōjō, naming himself as founder. Drawn from sessō 節操 (“constancy,” or “integrity”), Yamaguchi’s newly coined term *setsu ritsu* 節律 carried the meaning of women disciplining their integrity or chastity. Yamaguchi reflected in the name itself his intention to establish Nanaosan as a religious training ground open to women.

Yamaguchi was born in 1928, the second son of a family deeply rooted in Dorogawa as longtime stewards of Yomegachaya, the teahouse that developed as a support site for the Praying Mantis Cave. The reader will recall that the Praying Mantis Cave holds an important place in Ōminesan’s religious landscape, as En no Gyōja’s former training grounds and site where Shōbō exterminated a big snake. Yomegachaya fell into decline after improved roads facilitated an easier passage to Sanjōgatake’s trailhead, and was only recently revived by Yamaguchi’s new religious group.

In his youth, Yamaguchi was extremely active in Ryusenji’s Eight Great Dragon King cult.<sup>25</sup> He first thought he would become a doctor, but soon realized his interest in healing extended beyond the physical body.<sup>26</sup> Yamaguchi practiced ascetic training at many mountains, including Sanjōgatake, Mount Mizugaki (*Mizugakiyama* 瑞牆山) and Kaikoma Peak (*Kaikomagatake* 甲斐駒ヶ岳) in Yamanashi Prefecture, Fujisan, and others, before secluding himself in the Big Snake Lair atop Nanaosan. According to Nanaosan tradition, while meditating in the cave Yamaguchi came to realize that En no Gyōja himself had endured three years of ascetic practice here, accompanied by one of the Eight Great Dragon

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by the will of Maō Gongen ten million years ago.

<sup>25</sup> Itō notes that he always attended the departing soldiers’ repatriation prayer (*shusseï heishi no fukuin kigan* 出征兵士の復員祈願) at the temple. “Ōminesan no nyonin kinsei,” 42.

<sup>26</sup> I often heard members describe the group’s draw in terms of the physical healing powers of the cave, its spring water, and the founder himself. Yamaguchi is regarded as having psychic and supernatural powers.

Kings, Shinkōsei ryūō 神光成龍王. He subsisted only on spring water that trickles down a wall in the upper reaches of the cave.<sup>27</sup> Yamaguchi was also struck with the insight that this cave was a place to confine the wicked minds (*jashin* 邪心) of humans, and that the big snake (*ja* 蛇) represented that evil (*ja* 邪). According to the strict order of Maō Gongen, appointed protector god of dragons, the cave was blocked to prevent the snake (i.e., evil) from escaping. At some point, the cave was largely forgotten.<sup>28</sup>

Ascetic practice at Nanaosan is centered on a ritual cave ascent to the Big Snake's Lair, also known as the Inner Precinct (Figure 6.17). A steep three-kilometer trail leads from the main hall to the cave entrance. Devotees shout the popular *yamabushi* chant “Rokkon shōjō” 六根清浄 (“Purify the six senses!”) on the ascent, stopping along the way to offer prayers to other enshrined deities.<sup>29</sup> A female voice is often broadcast along the trail, which is wired to the summit, narrating the group's history and teachings. A guide is required for a visitor to enter the cave; at present a single acolyte is charged with this role. He leads recitations of the *Heart Sutra* to entreat the deities and secure safe passage, performs a rite at the main altar, and lights candles and incense along the way. Once inside the cave, a short

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<sup>27</sup> The group maintains that Kūkai followed suit for a period of six years.

<sup>28</sup> The cave was not completely forgotten in Dorogawa. According to Kyōtani, in the Edo period it was considered (to some degree of jest) a place where men entered as heterosexuals and exited as homosexuals. In Kyōtani's own words, “This is late Edo talk, but there is also a legend that says if men go to the cave, they come out as ‘homosexual’” (*Edo makki no hanashi daga, dansei ga sono dōkutsu ni ikuto 'okama' ni natte kaette kuru to iu densetsu mo aru* 江戸末期の話だが、男性がその洞窟に行くと「おかま」になって帰ってくるという伝説もある). Interview, August 2, 2015.

<sup>29</sup> These include Kongō Ryūjin 金光龍神, Nagahime Ryūgami 長姫龍神 (the female snake Shōbō vanquished from the Praying Mantis Cave), Shirosen Kaō Ōkami 白仙香翁大神, and Shirohige Ōkami 白鬚大神. Kujaku myōō 孔雀明王 was enshrined in 1994 at the cave entrance. Jibo Kannon *bodhisattva* 慈母觀世音菩薩, En no Gyōja Jinben Daibosatsu 役行者神變大菩薩, Dainichi Daishō *fudō myōō* 大日大聖不動明王, Hachi *tengu daireijin* 八天空大靈神, and Nikkō Jizō Daibosatsu 日光地藏大菩薩 are also enshrined in the main hall near Yomegachaya.

metal staircase leads along a confined path, which dead ends at a vertical shaft some ten meters long and slightly larger in circumference than an average adult. An iron ladder is affixed to one side.<sup>30</sup> The climb up, clenching wet metal rungs in sheer darkness, is not for the faint of heart.<sup>31</sup> Three altars of natural rock are formed in the upper chamber, dedicated to the Eight Great Dragon Kings, Fudō Myōō, and En no Gyōja. After rites are performed (chanting the *Heart Sutra*, entreating the deities in prayer), each person is offered a small sip of water from a small spring that runs behind the stalactites, which are enshrined as the Eight Great Dragon Kings (who Maō Gongen protects). The water is regarded as a potent healing source.

Yamaguchi's devotees regard En no Gyōja as an ordinary person who performed ascetic trainings at Ōminesan and Nanaosan and who was a proponent of gender equality.<sup>32</sup> Religious climbs to Sanjōgatake, they claim, are an opportunity for men to correct impurities of mind concerning women in an environment where they are not present. Yamaguchi does not seek to subvert Sanjōgatake's ban on women, therefore, but to provide an alternative approach to ascetic training. Nevertheless, many Nanaosan devotees I spoke with explained Sanjōgatake's ban on women as deriving from taboos concerning female impurity. Blood pollution is a non-issue at Nanaosan—women are welcome to climb Nanaosan at any time, even during menstruation.

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<sup>30</sup> The length of the cave shaft is often exaggerated to be twenty or thirty meters.

<sup>31</sup> I have witnessed women and men panic, express misgivings, and shed tears as they face the final push (I have also experienced some of these scenarios myself during fieldwork at the site). According to a standard interpretation of Shugendō, the purpose of ascetic training is to realize Buddhahood in this very body (*sokushin jōbutsu* 即身成仏). Training symbolizes death and rebirth. Ritual cave ascent at Nanaosan, moreover, simulates a return to the womb (and descent simulates rebirth). See Hardacre, "The Cave and the Womb World," esp. 166–172 for one interpretation of the meanings ascribed to the ritual ascent of this cave.

<sup>32</sup> Kyōtani, who is not connected to Nanaosan in any capacity, also noted that En no Gyōja is said to have been generous toward women. Interview, August 3, 2015.

Both Sakai Hideko and Yamaguchi Shinchoku promote religious practices for women at Ōminesan, but they differ in ideology and approach. For Sakai, purity and especially the avoidance of bodily impurity, formed a cornerstone of religious ideology. For Yamaguchi, the pursuit of mental purity stands as an ideal, and as an explanatory mechanism for women's ongoing exclusion from Sanjōgatake. Based on Sakai's personal narrative, as recorded in a 1988 interview, Eight Great Teachings seems less an alternative path of religious practice than a complement to Ryūsenji and "official" Ōminesan Shugendō (i.e., connected to Daigoji, Shōgo'in, or Kinpusenji) at Sanjōgatake. Sakai's close relationship with Sanbō'in and Daigoji through her father, evidenced by the title "high priest" (*daisōsei* 大僧正) bestowed to her in 1986, lend support to this interpretation.

In contrast to this, the group at Nanaosan is more clearly set apart from Ryūsenji and at Sanjōgatake. In fact, many Dorogawa residents and Ōminesan devotees maintain a careful distance from Yamaguchi and his followers. For the most part, local people elect not to comment on record about the group. This tight-lipped stance highlights tensions in the broader Dorogawa community.<sup>33</sup> Yamaguchi's teachings are guided by a subtle reinterpretation of Ōminesan lore that offers an alternative way of experiencing and practicing religion at Ōminesan, one that deemphasizes purity and emphasizes healing. Yamaguchi's teachings have proven to be quite popular, regularly drawing enthusiastic devotees from all over Japan (vis-à-vis the falling numbers of parishioners at Ryūsenji, which

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<sup>33</sup> On several occasions, I have been cautioned to take care in my contact with the new religious group at Nanaosan. One local man who was willing to talk, provided I not disclose his identity, explained that in Dorogawa Yamaguchi and his followers are viewed with suspicion and doubt. "They are not doing 'real' Shugendō," he claimed, "so we keep our distance." Nanaosan closes and opens in accord with Sanjōgatake, and also hold special events in the first weekend of August coinciding with Dorogawa's annual Ascetic's Festival, but in Dorogawa the divide between "official" Ōminesan Shugendō and Nanaosan is very apparent.

current head priest Okada confirmed in an interview).<sup>34</sup> Yamaguchi appeals to women with religious aspirations not fulfilled (or permitted) by the religious rules of the mountain. Still, although Yamaguchi's group embraces women's participation, its inner circle is comprised almost entirely of men, men lead closing and opening ceremonies at the Inner Precinct, and a male acolyte acts as keeper of the cave.

### *Yamabushi Women*

Women's active participation is welcomed not only by new religious groups at Ōminesan but by traditional lineages as well. Female Shugendō practitioners are widely acknowledged as a substantial (and continually rising) demographic today. In 1997, for instance, amid ongoing consultations between Daigoji, Shōgo'in, and Kinpusenji concerning the abolishment of female exclusion at the time of the 1300th Anniversary of En no Gyōja's death, each temple conducted surveys to gauge the gender composition of Shugendō instructors (*kyōshi* 教師). Daigoji's 4,194 teachers included 32% (1318) women. Daigoji also listed 92 female guides (*zoku sendatsu* 俗先達) and 192 male guides. Shōgo'in groups counted 37% (724) female teachers out of 2,644 total, as well as 135 female guides (*sendatsu* 先達) to 2,260 male guides. Kinpusenji's 2,004 teachers consisted of 49.7% (994) women.<sup>35</sup>

Although they were denied participation in En no Gyōja's 1300th Death Anniversary memorial at Ōminesanji in May 1997, women did participate in a series of commemorative events held at Daigoji, Kinpusenji, and Shōgo'in. Significant among these are the secret Eiin Kanjō rite of the Tōzan lineage of Shugendō (*Tōzan ha eiinkanjō* 当山派恵印灌頂), the fiftieth Katsuragi Mountain peak entering training of the imperially affiliated temple

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<sup>34</sup> I have spoken with Nanaosan devotees from Tokyo, Tōhoku 東北 (northern Japan), Okinawa, and elsewhere who regularly visit Dorogawa for religious pilgrimage.

<sup>35</sup> *Shin jidai*, 93.

Sanbō'in (*Dai go jū Sanbō'in monzeki Katsuragisan nyūbu shugyō* 第 50 回三宝院門跡葛城山入峰修行) and in the southern portion of the thirty-fifth Ōminesan Okugake peak entering training of imperially affiliated temple Sanbō'in (*Dai san jū go Sanbō'in monzeki Ōmine Okugake nyūbu shugyō* 第 35 回三宝院門跡大峯山奥駟入峰修行).

Shōgo'in had already been promoting women's inclusion in their Shugendō practices. Female devotees were invited to participate in an important consecration rite of Shōgō'in, the Jinzen kanjō 深仙灌頂, held on September 5, 1981, on the Okugake Trail. Jinzen is regarded as one of the most sacred Ōminesan Shugendō sites, the center of the womb-mandala and seat of the Buddha Mahavairocana.<sup>36</sup> The twelfth-century *Shozan engi* (which contains a story of En no Gyōja's mother living in a cave at Jinzen, as mentioned in chapter one), for example, identifies Ōminesan as the sacred liminal space between Yoshino, conceived as the Womb World (*taizōkai* 胎藏界), and Kumano, conceived as the Diamond World (*kongōkai* 金剛界). Details of the Jinzen kanjō rites held here are secret, as are many Shugendō ceremonies, songs, and symbolic meanings, but Swanson notes the general form as consisting of "confession and other preparatory rituals, after which the initiate receives baptism (sprinkling) of holy water on his head (*kanjō*) and the secret seal of initiation from Shōgo'in."<sup>37</sup> A fire ritual follows. Jinzen kanjō are held roughly once every ten years, and were performed in 1886, 1920, 1950, and 1975 before the 1981 ceremony that allowed women's participation. The 1981 Jinzen Kanjō included sixty-five female members out of 408 total participants. The female spirit medium from Shikoku named Ogamiya who attempted to climb Sanjōgatake in 1947, as mentioned in chapter five, along with another from Okinawa.

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<sup>36</sup> See Grapard, "Flying Mountains," esp. 207–215; and Satō, "Changes in the Concept of Mountains in Japan."

<sup>37</sup> Swanson, "Shugendō and the Yoshino-Kumano Pilgrimage," 74.

## Conclusions

Since 1960, women have gained substantial ground at the mountain, quite literally, as new temples, trails, and opportunities for religious practice in the Shugendō tradition opened to them. Ryūsenji's Dragon King's Waterfall, the sale of female guide permits to Inamuragatake and the designation of "Women's Ōmine," Gojō Kakuchō and the snake god Nōten Ōkami at Yoshino, Sakai Hideko and Eight Great Teachings, and Yamaguchi Shinchoku's Big Snake Lair at Nanaosan stand as twentieth-century traditions of invention intended to promote women's inclusion at Ōminesan, regardless of whether they reflect clearly religious agendas or not. Exploring these provides a fuller understanding of how women (and men) participate in and contribute to a sacred space, even one famous for its restricted geography.

## Conclusion:

### A Mountain Apart, The Traditions Within

The stone and wooden markers set into Ōminesan's physical landscape are the only fixed voices for the exclusion of women. Other boundaries and barriers that set Sanjōgatake apart as a sacred site are anything but stable. This study challenges the standard interpretive model of ascribing female exclusion to an unquestioned and unquestionable position in early Japanese history. It highlights the multilayered and multifaceted attitudes toward female exclusion and responses to them, then presents fresh perspectives on the establishment and breakdown of the boundary lines, both real and imagined, at Ōminesan.

Religious traditions, like places and people, are in flux. The conceptual dynamics and practical realities of “change” are a major touchstone in this study of the sacred Ōminesan and its lived religious traditions. As the thesis has demonstrated, the notion of female exclusion from sacred mountains finds a place, albeit marginal, in both scholarly and popular perceptions as a bricolage of superstitions, customs, and beliefs. Together they comprise (ostensibly) a layer of Japanese cultural history that stands for tradition, and then tradition takes center stage as the *raison d'être* for practices that would otherwise be considered discriminatory, contradictory to “World Heritage,” or unconstitutional. Previous approaches to female exclusion rely upon retrospective idealizations of history that are neither grounded in real contexts nor aligned with lived realities at Ōminesan or other mountain sites such as Hieizan and Kōyasan.

The foregoing pages lay bare the mutable nature of female exclusion, a historic and ongoing religious tradition at Ōminesan, by unpacking a series of

encounters between perceived traditions and historically contingent agents and arguments from the late nineteenth through the twenty-first century. The encounter between Ōminesan's traditions and the pro-Western Meiji state, which sought to implement a legally tendered policy (Edict 98, 1872) of open access to mountain temples, shrines, and trails, drew the ban on women at the mountain into sharper historical relief, revealing a polarity between agents and arguments over its propriety. Not until the 1920s and 1930s, however, did available sources allow a detailed view of the parameters of debate surrounding female exclusion. Not unlike the politics of preservation that guided the creation of Yoshino–Kumano National Park in 1936 (which includes Ōminesan and Sanjōgatake), characterized by the selective inclusion and exclusion of lands according to contemporary agendas, female exclusion was simultaneously confirmed as a government-sanctioned “mountain rule” and yet excised completely from the official statements of National Park literature.

When the mountain and its forbidden-to-women peak were brought into the “Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range” UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2004, moreover, a similar pattern of selective re-envisioning occurred, as temple and government authorities sought to promote cultural heritage and tourism but omitted mention of female exclusion—and UNESCO permitted it. On the surface, for example, to most visitors to the mountain today, this fact masked the exclusion. Theoretically, however, it amplified the exclusion more than ever by erasing it at the most public (i.e., international) level of exposure the mountain had ever received. In contrast to the much-cited tenth-century Chinese account of Ōminesan as a peak off-limits to women, preserved in the travelogue *Giso rokujō*, today the tradition of female exclusion is conspicuously absent from modern acknowledgements of the mountain's unique cultural and religious heritage—even if,

as chapter three demonstrates, that silent fact has always existed as a matter of central importance beneath the official line, embedded within religious practices. The encounter between female exclusion and modern cultural imaginations points to an inherent contradiction embodied in the very notion of tradition, one that demonstrates its constructed and contrived aspects. It reveals that expediency, not cultural or religious transmission alone, is a dominant driving force.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, although political, social, and economic factors in theory make it increasingly difficult to maintain female exclusion at the mountain, religious belief and tradition do not necessarily operate on complementary levels. The encounter between female exclusion and lay authority detailed in chapter four suggests the power of emotional and other kinds of economic investments in tradition. Ōminesan's temple authorities, in order to "build a role [for Shugendō] that responds to the demands of this age" and avoid being considered a "tradition of gender discrimination," attempted to lift the barrier in 1997 yet were halted by laymen, laywomen, and their supporters who held steadfast to their (traditional) view of Sanjōgatake as appropriate for visits by men alone.<sup>2</sup> Yet these were the same parties who raised little objection when the boundary lines were reduced for economic reasons and the Mother's Hall was divested of its longstanding significance in 1970. The 1970 boundary line reconfiguration clearly demonstrated that female exclusion was less important to local communities and their patrons than changing economic needs, and the advancement of tourism and industry prevailed.

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<sup>1</sup> I recommend the edited volume *Japan and Asian Modernities* (London: Routledge, 2007) for many insightful analyses of the intersection between culture, tradition, and modernity in Asia. Markus Oedewald's chapter on the uses of tradition in Japanese domestic tourism (esp. 185–193) offers particularly valuable discussion of the meaning and mediation of tradition.

<sup>2</sup> *Shin jidai*, 107.

The final two chapters pull away from the invisibility suggested by female exclusion to consider how women and men challenge the ban and also how they circumvent it. In the stories of women and men climbing or attempting to climb Sanjōgatake presented in chapter five, we encounter the contested nature of tradition. Rules engender resistance, resistance affects the rules. At Ōminesan, challenges to the ban had a dual effect. For supporters of the ban, it had the effect of crystallizing different viewpoints under the single banner of “religious tradition” and an implied gender separation (*kubetsu*). For opponents of the ban, challenges served as a measure to publicly expose an anachronistic but enduring practice of gender discrimination (*sabetsu*). Challenges to the ban have had the cumulative effect of creating an ever-widening polarization between the two perspectives (separation and discrimination), which has in turn made “tradition” more fixed and stable as deployed by supporters of the ban. Finally, as explored in chapter six, alternative religious practices that embrace women (and are in some cases premised upon women’s inclusion) in the greater Ōminesan area, outside Sanjōgatake, shed light on the encounter between exclusion and inclusion and belie a strict dichotomy between the two that does not necessarily reflect lived realities at the mountain.<sup>3</sup> Each of these encounters stand as poignant moments in Ōminesan’s modern narrative, occasions when specific agents with specific agendas re-craft and re-envision the symbolic, practical, and physical parameters of female exclusion.

Ōminesan is a peak set apart and bound by the past, yet inevitably shaped by historical contingencies in the present. Female exclusion at the mountain represents a dynamic process of tradition-making, one that is “much loved by modernity,” to

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<sup>3</sup> If recent attempts to climb Sanjōgatake by transgender individuals serve as any indicator, there will continue to be a series of objections to female exclusion from areas that have not been imagined by many local people.

borrow from anthropologist Nelson Graburn.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, its expediency reveals the highly constructed aspects of tradition even to those who would respect its maintenance and preservation in a modern world. In other words, traditions face obstacles when situated in context (and, by definition, this must be a modern context, because without the modern there is no tradition) and are fundamentally shaped by them.<sup>5</sup> For supporters, female exclusion serves as an indicator of stability, something permanent, unchanging, and unique that binds devotees to the mountain and roots them in a deep, traditional past that holds authority. And yet these same people will express ambivalence or even displeasure toward the practice when called for by a particular situation, especially one that affects their livelihood.

Reasons must be invented to subterfuge the authority of tradition, but they are accepted because the authority shifts to livelihood or similarly impactful concerns. On the one hand, then, we can say that female exclusion is so profoundly rooted that support for its preservation and respect for its provenance appears to be less an active choice than an embedded given. On the other hand, economic, cultural, and even religious realities at the mountain play an important role in decision-making as well, and they do not always favor tradition.

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<sup>4</sup> Graburn, Nelson H., “What is Tradition?” *Museum Anthropology* 24, no. 2/3 (2001): 8. Graburn views traditions as “historically created phenomena” that are often conceived as timeless “because people want them to be so and because the customs become invested with authority that is difficult to challenge” (p. 8). In a somewhat similar manner, cultural anthropologist Alice Horner conceptualizes tradition in terms of a reservoir—a supply of cultural identity, uniqueness, and safety that can be dipped into. Reservoirs are by definition artificial constructions—they can be filled or and drained at will. Alice E. Horner, “The Assumption of Tradition: Creating, Collecting, and Conserving Cultural Artifacts in the Cameroon Grassfields (West Africa)” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1990), esp. 14–17.

<sup>5</sup> Graburn gives the example of the Native American tradition of using peyote or playing gambling games as practices whose appropriateness has been questioned in modern times.

Viewing female exclusion as less a cultural entity of ancient repute than a slippery conglomerate of social, political, and religious beliefs and practices directs our attention to the importance of change, even expediency. A nuanced approach to researching women's religious histories in Japan that questions purported history—including recorded history—and acknowledges this expediency will only enrich our understanding of the subjects involved, as I have endeavored to demonstrate here. I hope that in this way, and others, the present study of Ōminesan and its changing tradition of female exclusion sheds light on both specific places and broad ideas in the study of religion, culture, and gender.

## Epilogue:

### Lines, Realities, and Beyond

Ōminesan is a “mountain of beliefs,” explained Miyagi Tainen, head priest of Shōgo’in. “That these beliefs are alive explains why the exclusion of women is alive.”<sup>1</sup> Men climb Sanjōgatake for a variety of reasons that interweave spiritual and worldly dimensions. For many, climbing the mountain reflects a belief that men can and should separate from worldly life, and break away from ordinary routine to test their physical and mental endurance in a harsh environment.<sup>2</sup> Pilgrimage to Sanjōgatake, “another world,” signifies one’s belief in the implied symbolic death and rebirth in the womb of the mountain goddess—it is a journey of spiritual purification that allows men to return to daily existence with renewed vigor and power, drawn from the goddess herself. Climbing the mountain is also a belief in the fellowship of the male sex.

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted from a discussion between members of *Motomeru kai* (“Ōminesan nyonin kinsei” no kaihō wo motomeru kai 「大峯山女人禁制」の開放を求める会) and Miyagi, held at Shōgo’in, June 15, 2012. A full transcription is available online at <http://www.on-kaiho.com/action/diary/index.html> (accessed November 22, 2015). Original text reads: “Ōminesan” wa shinkō no yama dearu. Shinkō ga ikite irukara “nyonin kinsei” ga ikite iru to ieru 大峰山は信仰の山である。信仰が生きているから「女人禁制」が生きているといえる。Miyagi continues: “The prohibition [against women] is upheld by a right to decide held by Ōminesanji’s faith organizations. One can say ‘women’s prohibitions’ before the Edo period from the standpoint of precepts, and today from the standpoint of custom” *Ōminesan tera no shinkō dantai no motsu ketteiken ni yotte kinsei ga mamora rete iru. Edo jidai izen wa kairitsu no tachiba kara, ima wa kairitsudenaku, shūkan ni yotte ‘nyonin kinsei’ to ieru* 大峰山寺の信仰団体の持つ決定権によって禁制が守られている。江戸時代以前は戒律の立場から、今は戒律でなく、習慣によって「女人禁制」といえる。

<sup>2</sup> Masutani described this worldly existence as “smoking cigarettes and reading the newspaper at home with the wife,” gesturing as if puffing a cigarette. Interview, July 18, 2014.

Almost a millennium ago the Heian-period courtier Fujiwara no Moromichi 藤原師通 (1062–1099) wrote of such a fellowship among men in his journal:

The blue cliffs soar up to heaven; the halls are wreathed in clouds.

Sacred niches look out upon the valleys; meditation monks sip upon the mist.<sup>3</sup>

This image of pure-minded men of the cloth “sipping the mist” of the mountains is part and parcel of a body of idealized religious practices at Ōminesan that cannot necessarily be reconciled with lived realities at the mountain today nor, we venture, in times past. To watch men in *yamabushi* attire pack coolers of beer at dawn for what devolves into a spirit-sipping journey up Sanjōgatake is surely at odds with the notion of religious pilgrimage more widely recognized in religious circles.<sup>4</sup>

Certain men who visit Dorogawa, some only tenuously affiliated with Shugendō or historic climbing guilds, maintain a well-deserved reputation for raucous behavior at the mountain.<sup>5</sup> A man I met at Dorogawa’s Ascetics’ Festival, an Osaka schoolteacher in his early forties who led groups of young men annually to Sanjōgatake, volunteered his perspective on men’s “play” in Dorogawa. He waxed nostalgically about the way things used to be in his father and grandfather’s time. The man was referring to prostitution, a central part of Dorogawa’s founding spirit.

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<sup>3</sup> *Go-Nijō Moromichiki* 後二条師通記 (*Record of Moromichi of Second Avenue*), quoted in Blair, *Real and Imagined*, 58.

<sup>4</sup> Alcoholic beverages may be purchased in direct proximity to the trailhead at the Bridge of Great Purity, from a vending machine or a small cafe.

<sup>5</sup> I have personally been catcalled by groups of men sitting on the porches of inns along Dorogawa’s main drag. I have also witnessed men placing envelopes containing money down the blouses of female passersby during Dorogawa’s yearly Ascetic’s Festival. On both occasions the men exuded an air of playfulness more than anything, but it absolutely did not convey what one might expect of devoted or semi-devoted religious practitioners. Of course, not all groups of men who visit Dorogawa represent guilds or make claims to religious aspirations or abstinences.

Prostitution was also the town's financial backbone, since replaced by water (hot springs tourism and the sales of local "Rumbling Waters" brand spring water). For the most part, male and female residents are not very forthcoming about such matters today, but most acknowledge the fact that previous residents hosted a flourishing red-light district.

Dorogawa took shape as a town in the seventeenth and eighteenth century when guilds of laymen began visiting Sanjōgatake, coinciding with the emergence of Japan's travel industry. As historian Amy Stanley demonstrates in her study of prostitution in early modern Japan, two primary factors fueled Japan's early-modern sex trade: a burgeoning service economy supported by peasants with increased purchasing power and the emergence of a culture of travel. The travel industry, Stanley claims, "was also in large part a sex industry."<sup>6</sup> Men purchased sexual access on their travels for the same reasons they gathered trinkets or indulged in local delicacies—they sought to experience and collect memories from different places. Local people living near popular travel destinations also benefited by supplying the desirable commodities of people and products.<sup>7</sup> Ōminesan, a sacred and set-apart peak, along with the liminal spaces at its edges, drew visitors from near and far.

Dorogawa's red-light district operated as a sanctioned part of religious tourism at Ōminesan. Men who rewarded completion of their ascetic pursuits with worldly delights were so ubiquitous that new descriptive terms emerged from the

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<sup>6</sup> Amy Stanley, *Selling Women: Prostitution, Markets, and the Household in Early Modern Japan* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012), 105.

<sup>7</sup> Japan's ruling authorities in general sanctioned these activities, as it was "counterproductive to attempt to impose order" on prostitution because doing so "risked inhibiting commerce, breeding poverty, and initiating a cycle of unrest." *Ibid.*, 107. At the same time, governmental bodies were imposing increasingly restrictive laws regarding a woman's place. This likely gave rise to a more clearly defined vision of female exclusion at Ōminesan (and elsewhere), an idea I am keen to investigate further.

practice: *shōjin age* 精進上げ, *shōjin ake* 精進開け, and *shōjin otoshi* 精進落とし.

*Shōjin* 精進 (Skt. *vīrya*), a Buddhist term, literally refers to “vigor,” denoting the struggle that one must endure to complete a fast or to practice asceticism. Terms like *shōjin age* (“the lifting of [the practice of] vigor”), *shōjin ake* (“breaking [the practice of] vigor”), and *shōjin otoshi* (“dropping [the practice of] vigor”) signify the end of austerities, when it becomes possible to indulge in pleasures that have been denied. These terms are not strictly limited to sex (although they often imply it), but also denote such things as eating meat and consuming alcohol. The end of religious austerities signaled a combination of rewards, sought by men with varying motivations, some of which drew sharp criticism. Dorogawa is the liminal space between the profane and sacred, but when the sacred realm is not entirely pure, it also serves to reinforce the perception that it is so.

In his 1927 *Shūzoku zakki* 習俗雑記 (*Miscellaneous notes on manners and customs*), Miyatake Shōzō 宮武省三 writes:

Coming to Ōmine in particular has been said to require one thousand days of diligence, called from the olden days “*mitake sōji*” (精進) [sic]. Now it is the shame of laymen, called “giving away abstinence” at Yoshino. Especially for those first participating [in climbing the mountain], boys turning sixteen have a senior instruct them on buying a prostitute and take him to one. The customary practice of attaining manhood in this way is the likes of those truly extreme in corruption.

This practice also has the name *mine iri jaga* 峰入じやが. It is not like the *shugenja*'s “peak entering,” and they should not be compared at all.<sup>8</sup> 殊に大峯参りは、其むかし御嶽サウジ（精進）と言ひ、千日の精進を要すると稱されてゐたが、今では俗人のあさましさ、吉野で精進上げとて、殊に男子十六歳となりて初めて参加した者はこれを連行する先輩が女郎買いをもをしへて、是で一人前の男となつたなど言ふ慣行のあるが如き實に頹廢を極めた者で、是も名は峰入じやが、修験者の峰入とは似つきやうもない、全然競べものとはならないものである。

Men were not the sole beneficiaries of Ōminesan's liminal spaces, even if they certainly appear to have been the primary stakeholders. Miyake states that many women believed that “mingling” with *yamabushi* after their ascent would strengthen their fertility force.<sup>9</sup> Morinaga similarly notes the existence of a widespread belief that ascetics were thought to bring back with them the power of the female mountain god from their climbs and bestow blessings for fertility or heal illnesses.<sup>10</sup> Women stood to gain in practical terms, as proprietors, wives, and daughters of local businesses, and in spiritual terms, as recipients of the power of the mountain, which men who climbed Sanjōgatake brought back to town with them. The prostitutes benefited economically. This local state of affairs changed greatly after anti-prostitution legislation (*baishun bōshi hō* 売春防止法) was passed in 1956, and

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<sup>8</sup> Miyatake Shōzō 宮武省三, *Shūzoku zakki* 習俗雑記 (Saitama: Sakamoto Shoten, 1927), 8–9.

<sup>9</sup> Miyake, *Ōmine Shugendō no kenkyū*, 7.

<sup>10</sup> Morinaga, “Kindai no ‘Ōminesan,’” 23–24.

Dorogawa no longer seems to identify with this kind of practice even though it still serves to contrast with the sacred realm beyond it.<sup>11</sup>

The boundary line at the foot of Sanjōgatake in Dorogawa engendered a liminal space where purity (and profanity) was exchanged and negotiated. The exchange and negotiation can be understood to take shape in three manners: (1) between men and women in the form of union (often sexual acts); (2) between men, individually and in groups, in the form of spiritual and bodily abstinence pre-climb and gratification post-climb; and (3) from women to men, in the form of fertility and pleasure. The reasons men climb Sanjōgatake today—as in times past—draw on all of these and more. Here, in all reasoning and traditions, there is more to be found beyond the lines that set this mountain apart.

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<sup>11</sup> The prostitution industry in Japan did not cease to exist from this point in time, and there is reason to believe that it continued in Dorogawa. Itō broaches the sensitive subject of post-War prostitution in Dorogawa, discussing in particular the phenomenon of Ms. Gone to Japan (*Japayuki* ジャパゆき), foreign women from Taiwan, Korea, the Philippines, and elsewhere sent to Japan to work at “snack” establishments as hostesses. See Itō Sanae 伊東早苗, “Nyonin kinsei shikō: Ōminesan no ‘dentō’ to ‘Japayukisan’” 女人禁制私考—大峰山の「伝統」と「ジャパゆきさん」, *Ashinaka* あしなか 5 (1988): 12–16. Itō estimated that five such places were in operation in Dorogawa in 1988, and observed seven or eight Taiwanese hostesses lined up in the narrow store at one. Itō claims that an economic slump caused by depopulation and a collapsing forestry industry led some in Dorogawa to turn to prostitution. One 77-year-old female innkeeper she interviewed positively appraised the “Japayuki” in Dorogawa. “Anything that helps bring people in,” the woman remarked. Based on a conversation with a man in Dorogawa, Itō notes that men often conducted transactions and bartered for Dorogawa women while they lodged atop Sanjōgatake. According to a March 7, 1955 edition of the tourism publication *Nihon Kankō Shinbun* 日本観光新聞, Dorogawa was home to some nine restaurant fronts called “special drinking spots” (*tokuin ten* 特飲店). At one, several waitresses (*jokyū* 女給) drew in customers from the road. The same article reported that these women on average entertained three or four customers each per night. Half the customers had come from the mountain and half were Dorogawa locals. According to a 1960 report in the weekly publication *Shūkan gendai* 週刊現代, the presence of prostitution in Dorogawa that was related to organized crime was substantial enough for rumors to circulate that the great fire of 1946 was a curse on the town for allowing it. “Kinsei no yama wa sude ni nyonin ga nobotteita,” 37.

# Figures

## Chapter One: Drawing Lines

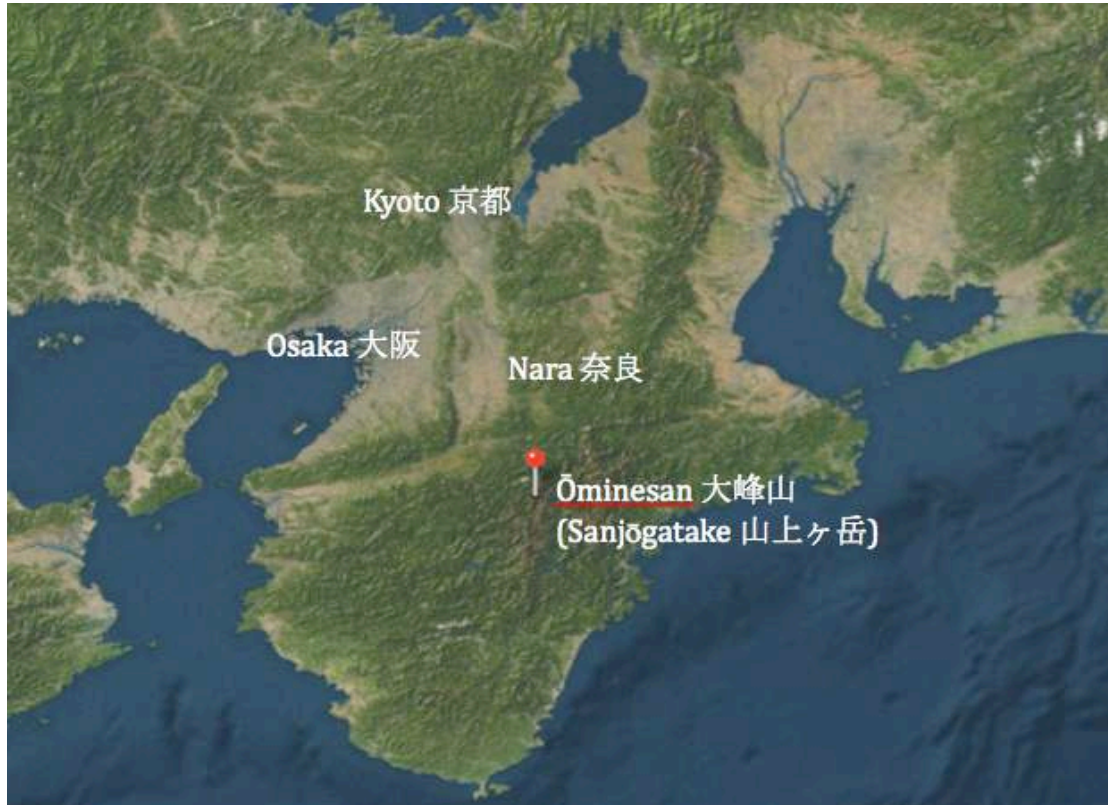


Figure 1.1. Ōminesan (the peak Sanjōgatake marked in red) within in the larger Kansai area of Honshū, Japan.



Figure 1.2. Present-day route of the Ōmine Okugake Trail (marked in red) through the Ōminesan range. Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons, available online at <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map-Omine-Okugakemichi-Pilgrimage-Route.jpg>.



Figure 1.3. En no Gyōja and his demon companions Zenki and Goki during the 2015 Ascetic's Festival in Dorogawa. Photograph courtesy of Sebastian Mayer on assignment with the author, 2015.



Figure 1.4. Mother's Hall, Dorogawa. Photograph courtesy of Sebastian Mayer on assignment with the author, 2015.



Figure 1.5. Ōminesan's bounded realm and important sites (current boundaries marked by a red X, pre-1970 boundaries marked by a blue X).



Figure 1.6. The Ōminesan range as viewed from Hieizan in northeast Kyoto. Sanjōgatake (1719m) is marked with blue arrow (Note: left is north, right is south). Photograph courtesy of Maro (<http://www.kyotocity.net/diary/2012/121301/>) with permission.



Figure 1.7. Bridge of Great Purity. Photograph courtesy of Sebastian Mayer on assignment with the author, 2015.



Figure 1.8. Main Sanjōgatake trailhead, Dorogawa. Right: “From here [onward] is the women’s restricted zone” (*kore yori nyonin kekkai* 從是女人結界; height 327cm, circumference 70cm). Photograph by the author, 2014.



Figure 1.9. Bilingual signage, boundary markers at main Sanjōgatake trailhead. Photograph courtesy of Sebastian Mayer on assignment with the author, 2015.



Figure 1.10. “Veneration from afar” site at the Great Bridge of Purity, current Sanjōgatake trailhead. Photograph by the author, 2015.



Figure 1.11. Greater Ōminesan area. Dorogawa (shaded red), Route 309 (marked in yellow) from Shimoichiguchi.

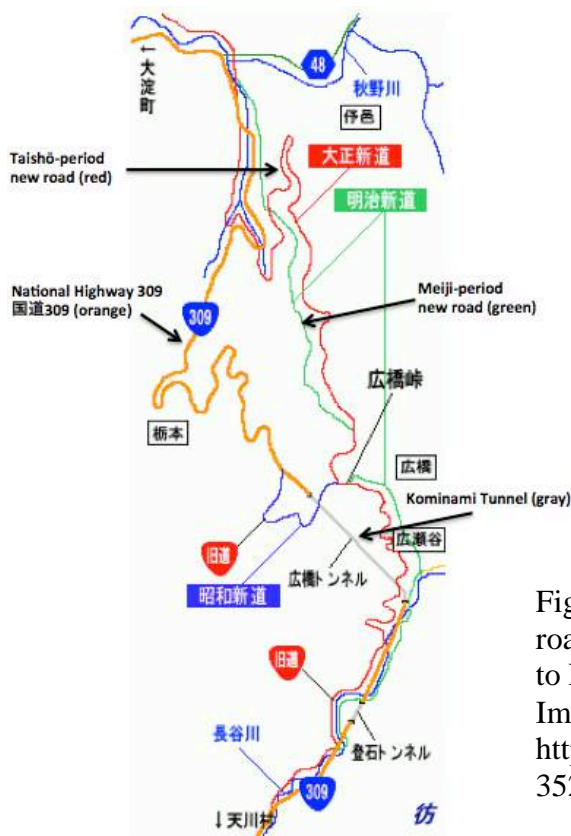


Figure 1.12. System of mountain roads leading south from Shimoichi to Dorogawa and Tenkawa Village. Image adapted from <http://road.uroneko.com/onr309-352.htm>.



Figure 1.13. Dorogawa and the River of Heaven. Photograph courtesy of Sebastian Mayer on assignment with the author, 2015.



Figure 1.14. Ryūsenji temple grounds and pond fed by “Dragon’s Mouth Spring.” Photograph by the author, 2015.



Figure 1.15. “From here [onward] women not permitted to enter” (*Kore yori nyonin iru koto o yurusazu* 從是不許入女人; height 157cm, circumference 44cm) dated to 1780. Ryūsenji temple grounds, Dorogawa. Photograph by the author, 2014.



Figure 1.16. Main entrance to headquarters of the new religious group at Nanaosan Ja no Kura. Photograph courtesy of Sebastian Mayer on assignment with the author, 2015.



Figure 1.17. Trail to Praying Mantis Cave and Bat Cave, Dorogawa. Photograph courtesy of Sebastian Mayer on assignment with the author, 2015.



Figure 1.18. Entrance to Bat Cave, Dorogawa (reputed living quarters of En no Gyōja). Photograph by the author, 2015.



Figure 1.19. Entrance to Praying Mantis Cave, Dorogawa (reputed religious training site of En no Gyōja). Photograph by the author, 2015.



Figure 1.20. Goyomatsu Limestone Cave, Dorogawa. Photograph courtesy of Sebastian Mayer on assignment with the author, 2015.



Figure 1.21. Lotus Crossing boundary site. Photograph by the author, 2015.



Figure 1.22. Inamuragatake, Dainichisan, Lotus Crossing, and Sanjōgatake. Photograph adapted from Nobunaga (<http://www.abaxjp.com/mylife.html>).



Figures 1.23, 1.24. Stone pillar (two angles) at the Mother's Hall, Dorogawa. Right: "From here [onward] is the women's restricted zone" (*kore yori nyōnin kekkai* 從是女人結界). Photographs courtesy of Sebastian Mayer on assignment with the author, 2015.



Figure 1.25. En no Gyōja holding his mother, Shiratōme, in alms bowl, Dorogawa Ascetic's Festival. Photograph courtesy of Sebastian Mayer on assignment with the author, 2015.



Figure 1.26. Turtle Stone, Sanjōgatake. Photograph courtesy of Pawel Pachciarek, 2015.

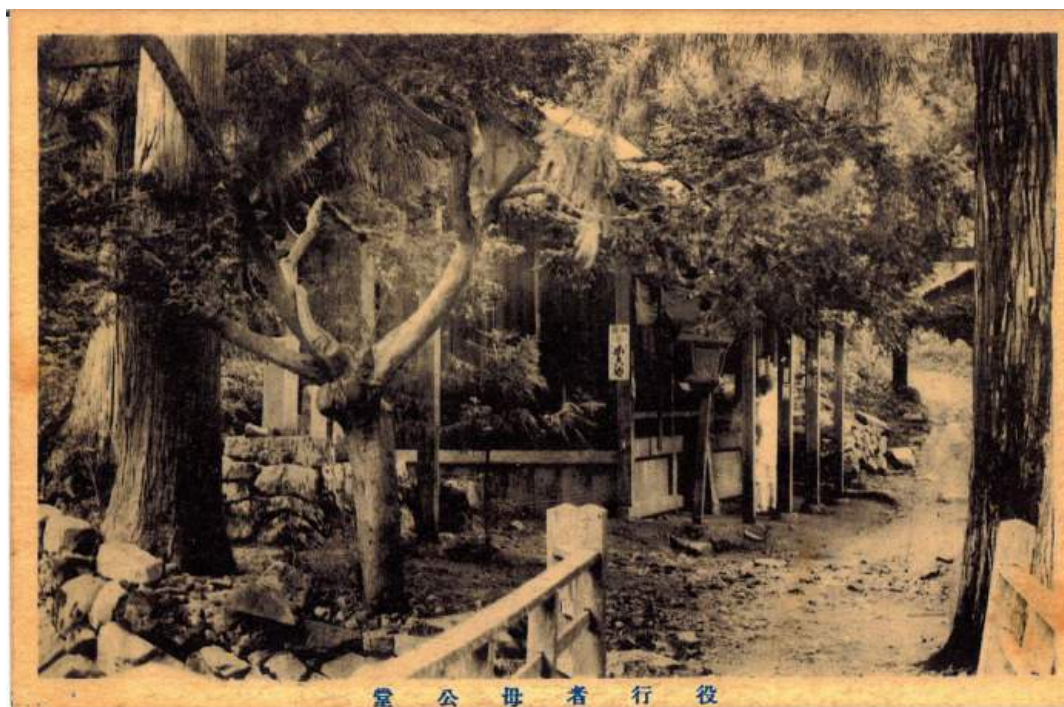


Figure 1.27. Mother's Hall, Dorogawa, 1918-1921. Photograph courtesy of Nara Prefectural Library, available online at <http://www.library.pref.nara.jp/supporter/naraweb/yosino-oomine-okugake.html>.



Figure 1.28. “From here [onward] is the women’s restricted zone” (*kore yori nyonin kekkai* 従是女人結界). Stone pillar at Aonegamine (Aizen no juku) dated to 1865, Yoshino. Photograph by the author, 2014.



Figure 1.29. Goban Pass boundary site. Photograph by the author, 2014.





Figure 1.32. Women “communing” with Shōbō Rigen Daishi at Ryūsenji fire ritual. Photograph courtesy of Sebastian Mayer on assignment with the author, 2015.

Chapter Two: State Visions, Local Realities

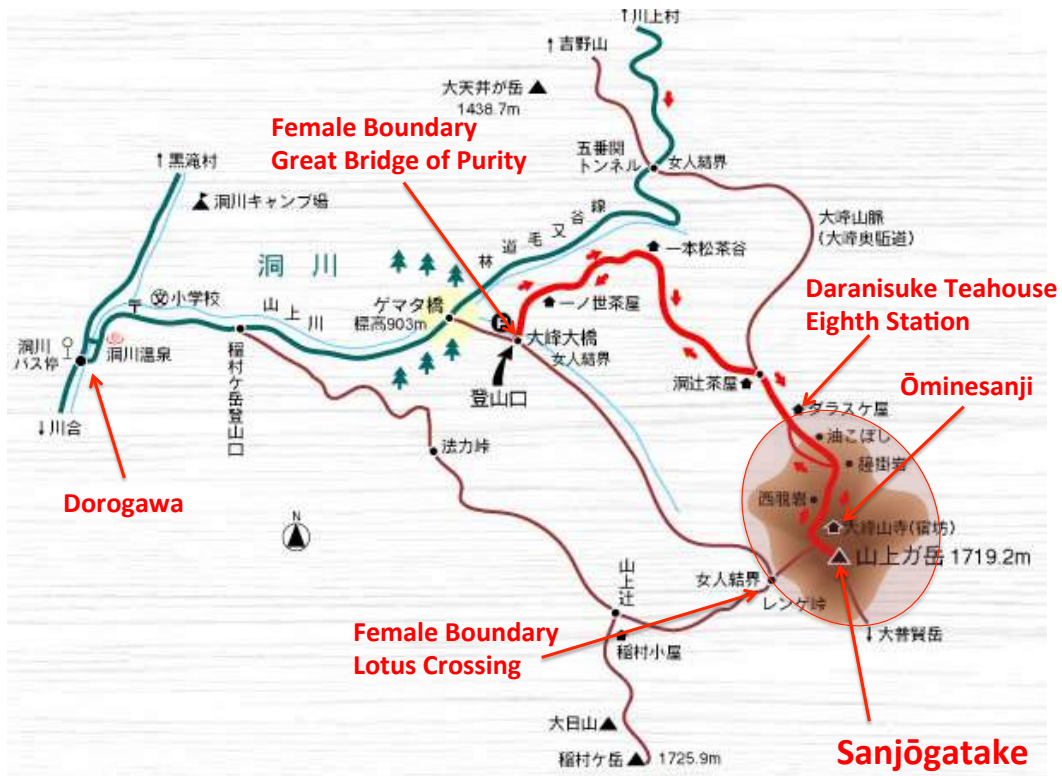


Figure 2.1. Sanjōgatake area map (privately owned area lined in red and shaded). Image adapted from [http://www.geocities.jp/nana\\_iwamoto/san/san1.html](http://www.geocities.jp/nana_iwamoto/san/san1.html).



Figure 3.1. Yoshino-Kumano National Park. Image available online at <http://www.env.go.jp/park/parks/index.html>.



「女人禁制」解かれて  
初めての婦人登山

堂守や樵夫が崇りを恐れる  
大和の靈山、大峰山を征服

山へ山へ登山シーズンの終結がきた、むかし高野山とともに女人禁制、行者詣りで有名な大和の大峰山も登山熱の盛んなころでは法眼目高らかに吹きたて、ゆく行者たちの先行の跡のみで

はなくなった、十五日には遑く千二百五十年の大群より明治六年まで女人には固く許されぬ禁制の門が開かれて以来はじめて大坂から二人の婦人がこの不可侵の靈山を征服し、山上の

行者や樵夫の群を驚かした、この二人の婦人は大阪市北區梅ヶ枝町岡田松江さん(二十二)と特區大正通一丁目石野秀さん(三十九)で今日までたいがい吉野または下市から洞川方面を経て登ったも

Figure 5.1. Two women who climbed Sanjōgatake. *Osaka Asahi Shinbun*, July 17, 1929.

## Chapter Six: Beyond Exclusion



Figure 6.1. Women and men at “Dragon’s Mouth” ablation site, Ryūsenji. Photograph courtesy of Yoshino, Ōmine, Kōya Sightseeing Area (<http://yoshino-ohmine-koya.jp>).



Figure 6.2 (also 1.5). Ōminesan's bounded realm and important sites (current boundaries marked by red X, pre-1970 boundaries marked by blue X).



Figure 6.3. Ryūsenji temple, front gate. Photograph by the author, 2014.



Figure 6.4. Ryūsenji temple, main gate. Photograph by the author, 2014.

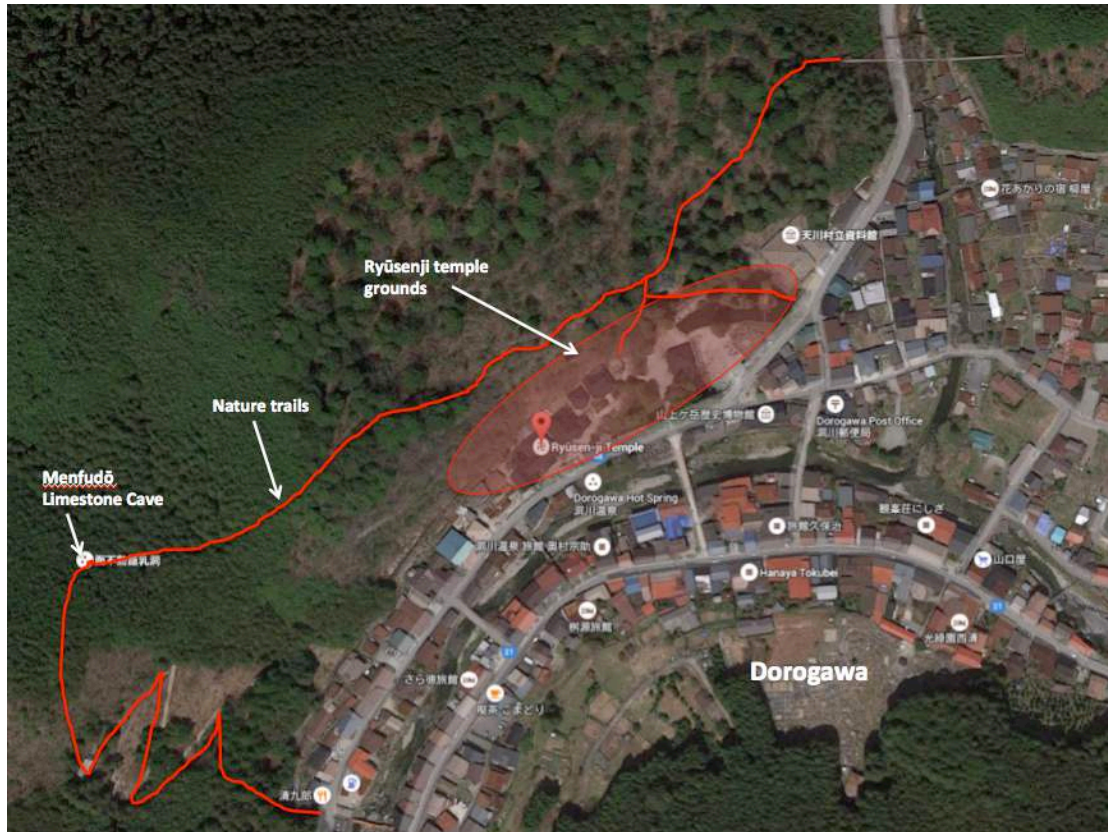


Figure 6.5. Ryūsenji temple grounds and surrounding trails. Image adapted from Google Maps.



Figure 6.6 (also 1.15). “From here [onward] women not permitted to enter” (*kore yori nyonin iru koto o yurusazu* 從是不許入女人; height 157cm, circumference 44cm) dated to 1780. Ryūsenji temple grounds, Dorogawa. Photograph by the author, 2014.



Figure 6.7 “Dragon King’s Waterfall” ablution site, Ryūsenji. Photograph courtesy of <http://eich.blog.jp/>.



Figure 6.8. “Dragon King’s Waterfall” ablution site, Ryūsenji. Photograph courtesy of <http://eich.blog.jp/>.



Figure 6.9. Inamuragatake and Dainichisan. Photograph adapted from "Priest's Box of Records" (Ossan no kiroku bako おっさんの記録箱; <http://blog.goo.ne.jp/dangonotare>).



Figure 6.10. Mountaintop Crossing and the convergence of trails to Sanjōgatake (left, north) and Inamuragatake (straight, east). Photograph by the author, 2015.



Figure 6.11. Lotus Crossing boundary site. Photograph by the author, 2015.



Figure 6.12. Viewing platform at the summit of Inamuragatake. Photograph by the author, 2015.



Figure 6.13. Sanjōgatake viewed from the summit of Inamuragatake. Photograph by the author, 2015.



Figure 6.14. Slope down to Ryūō'in, Yoshinoyama. Photograph courtesy of Mt. Yoshino Tourist Association, available online at [http://www.yoshinoyama-sakura.jp/temple/t\\_nouten.php](http://www.yoshinoyama-sakura.jp/temple/t_nouten.php).



Figure 6.15. Ryūō'in, Yoshinoyama. Photograph by the author, 2014.



Figure 6.16. Summit of Dainichisan. Photograph courtesy of <http://www.geocities.jp/fujiistr/Mt/Diary/koudai.html>.



Figure 6.17. Nanaosan mountain closing ceremony, Dorogawa. Photograph by the author, 2014.

Appendix One:  
 Ōminesan & Female Exclusion: A Timeline of Significant Events (1868–2005)

1868.4.5	Meiji state issues legislation requiring the separation of gods and buddhas
1872.3.27	Meiji state Edict 98 abolishes female exclusion at mountain shrines and temples
1873	Mountaintop Zaō Hall (present-day Ōminesanji) intends to allow female climbers when the season opened, but faces strong resistance from Dorogawa
1874	Mountaintop Zaō Hall becomes the Inner Precinct of Kinpu Shrine, managed by Kinpusenji in Yoshinoyama
1878.2.2	Meiji government extra directive allows private religious regulations
1886	Sanjōgatake mountaintop temple reverts to a Buddhist temple, becoming the Mountaintop Main Hall, management shared between Yoshino and Dorogawa.
1902	Daughter of shrine family in Katsuragi hikes Sanjōgatake (hearsay)
1906	Women are permitted in temples and shrines at Kōyasan  <i>End of Russo-Japanese War</i>
1910	<i>Japan annexes Korea</i>
1915	A group of female teachers from Osaka traveling on foot are turned away at Dorogawa trailhead (hearsay)
1926.7.17	Local youths hold a panel discussion in Dorogawa, agreeing the ban should be lifted for hometown development ( <i>Osaka Asahi Shinbun</i> )
1929	Two women (ages 22 and 39) from Osaka don kimono and bamboo hats and climb the mountain on a new route (photos published in newspaper)
1931	<i>Japan invades Manchuria</i>
1936	The entire Ōminesan range is designated part of Yoshino-Kumano National Park
1937	Yamada Naruo and Hyogo Prefecture Nishinomiya Mountaineering Club hike the entire restricted area with a woman  <i>Japan invades China</i>
1940	Sakai High School girl pupils summit Inamuragatake
1941.12.7	<i>Japan bombs Pearl Harbor</i>
1945.8.6, 9	<i>Atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki</i>  <i>The United Nations is established</i>
1946	Kinki Mountain Climbing Association appeals to Dorogawa to allow 250 Osaka and Nara female high school students to climb Sanjōgatake. Their local temples approve it, but Ōminesan local devotee representatives hold an urgent meeting and demand that each school halt their plans. Matsuyama Keikichi of the Kinki Mountain Climbing Association pretends to have the American military's permission and fifteen female teachers and students, along with an American woman, attempt to climb the summit from Kashiwagi; they are persuaded not to by a group of 300 local people from Dorogawa who cross over to Osaza in the middle of the night to stop them.  Lieutenant Colonel S. Henderson, in charge of Nara Prefecture shrine and temple affairs, officially recognizes female exclusion; placards in both Japanese and English are placed at the Mother's Hall boundary gate.
1948	An Osaka woman known as "Jojirō chō" is stopped when she attempts to hike Ōminesan.

1953	Yamaguchi Shinchoku founds new Shugendō sect at Ja no Kura, Nanaosan.
1956	Women and men of Tokyo's "Association Promoting Mountain Climbing and Skiing" seek to summit Ōminesan, but more than one thousand local residents and lay believers picket and prevent them.
1960	Ryūsenji in Dorogawa opens temple grounds to women for the first time.  Female guide permits for Inamuragatake sold to women at Ryūsenji.
1964	A water ablation site built at Ryūsenji for female practitioners; called the "Dragon King's Waterfall."
1970	Boundary lines are reduced by twelve kilometers on the Yoshino side to Goban Pass and two kilometers on the Dorogawa side to the Bridge of Great Purity.
1975	A "veneration from afar" site is built close to the boundary at the Bridge of Great Purity.
1981.9.5	Female Shugendō practitioners participate for the first time in Shōgo'in Jinzen Kanjō rite.
1997	Amidst plans for the 1300th Death Anniversary of En no Gyōja, Ōminesan authorities decide to permanently lift ban on women, but lay climbing guilds and Dorogawa local residents do not accept the proposal and stop the plan.  New signboard erected at boundary lines reaffirms female exclusion.
1999	Ten female teachers from Nara Prefecture summit Sanjōgatake.
2000	En no Gyōja's 1300th Death Anniversary (no women in attendance).
2003	Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range are recommended as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.  A representative of the U.N. International Council on Monuments & Sites (ICOMOS) surveys the region.  A group temporarily calling itself the Association Seeking the Opening of Ōminesan's (Sanjōgatake) Female Exclusion forms.
2004	April: Association Seeking the Opening of "Ōminesan Female Exclusion" presents more than 12,000 signatures to UNESCO, the Japanese national government, Nara Prefecture, related temples, local communities, and various other agencies.  July: World Heritage status designated
2005	November: a group of thirty transsexuals attempt to summit Sanjōgatake

Appendix Two:  
Further Historiographical Notes<sup>1</sup>

Female exclusion from sacred mountains first received attention from Yanagita Kunio, who focused on tracing the origins of the phenomenon through folk legends. Yanagita, one of the most influential early scholars cited in studies of female exclusion, focused on folk practices to explain women's restrictions and suggested very early, pre-historical origins that could be gleaned from legends.<sup>2</sup> Yanagita recounted legends and folk tales of female figures who were transformed into rocks upon entering mountains, which for him accounted for the stone barrier markers that dot Japan's mountain landscapes still today. Yanagita proposed that such tales (and stones) emerged out of ancient folk practices involving priestesses who conducted rituals at the base of mountains, the sites of which apparently came to mark areas off-limits to women. Despite its literary basis and speculative character, Yanagita's work and subsequent interpretations of it exerted significant influence, becoming something of a standard interpretive model for scholars and the public alike.

The tradition of female exclusion at Ōminesan appeared in scattered references in the first half of the twentieth century, first in the journals *Shugen* and *Jinben*, affiliated with the Honzan and Tōzan lineages of Shugendō, respectively (I provide close readings of several in chapter three). Writer and engineer Kishida Hideo, for example, wrote several short journal articles (one in *Jinben*, and another in *Kokuritsu kōen*) in 1933 and 1936 on the debates concerning female exclusion that took place as

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<sup>1</sup> This appendix is intended to supplement material presented in the main body of the dissertation; it is not an exhaustive list of previous sources on female exclusion.

<sup>2</sup> "Folk," in a most basic sense, references local practices and beliefs common to groups of people that often exist without regard to a specific school of thought or tradition.

Ōminesan was nominated to become a National Park. Following the National Park designation, scholarly interest significantly declines for more than a decade.

In 1950, folk religionist Hori Ichirō 堀一郎 published a brief theoretical analysis of female exclusion, laying out basic ideas concerning Buddhist contributions (i.e., the “five hindrances”) and cultural notions of female pollution, which later scholars would elaborate in analysis.<sup>3</sup>

The next historiographical wave began in 1956, stimulated in part by a nationwide mountain climbing boom (the reader can refer to chapter five for more on this). That year, folklorist Harada Toshiaki 原田敏明 framed female exclusion in terms of the lowly position allotted women in rural village cults (*saigi* 祭儀).<sup>4</sup> According to Harada, women were not allowed to participate in rituals because their “basis for understanding was sullied.”<sup>5</sup> Tendai and Shingon Buddhist discourses aggrandized this social belief in the Heian period, Harada argued, thus the rise of female exclusion can be attributed to both ancient Japanese social customs—unique to each village or mountain—and imported Buddhist teachings.

Female exclusion received widespread news media coverage, including a special edition of the mountain climbing journal *Ashinaka* (*Straw Sandals*), albeit only twenty pages in total length. Of note therein, Makita Mitsumasa reported on women who climbed Ōminesan in spite of the religious restrictions in “Ōmine ni nobotta josei” 大峰に登った女性 (“Women who Climbed Ōmine”). Furthermore, female mountain climber and essayist Murai Yoneko 村井米子 wrote two articles,

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<sup>3</sup> Hori Ichirō 堀一郎, “Nyonin kinsei” 女人禁制, in *Hori Ichiro chosakushū* 堀一郎著作集 5, 61–64 (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1987 [1950]).

<sup>4</sup> Harada Toshiaki 原田敏明, *Shakai to denshō* 社会と伝承 (Kumamoto: Shakai to denshō no kai, 1956), esp. 20–29.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

“Yama no nyonin kinsei” 山の女人禁制 (“The Mountain’s Female Exclusion”) and, “Zoku, yama no nyonin kinsei” 続、山の女人禁制 (“Continued, The Mountain’s Female Exclusion”). Murai, the first female scholar to address the topic, diverged from the previous folk approaches and broached historical dimensions in brief and basic terms.<sup>6</sup>

Scholarly interest waned again, and the topic received little attention until 1968, when folk religion scholar Iwashina Koichirō devoted a chapter to female exclusion in *Yama no minzoku* 山の民俗 (*Mountain Folklore*). Iwashina’s thirty-seven-page discussion was the most comprehensive to date, providing for the first time perhaps both historical and symbolic analyses of Ōminesan. Iwashina argued that female exclusion has formed the base requirement of religious ascetic practice since the Heian period. Shugendō, according to Iwashina, centers upon the belief that religious training is an exclusive endeavor—it was founded by an extraordinary person, En no Gyōja, who delineated a form of training that is not possible in the presence of women (let alone able to be conducted by women).

After another period of scholarly inactivity, Miyake Hitoshi emerged as the new leading authority on female exclusion from mountains. In the 1986 *Shugendō jiten* 修験道辞典, Miyake explained female exclusion in terms of an attitude of male centrality, or male inclusion, in religious rites of village society.<sup>7</sup> This attitude, Miyake claimed, carried over into mountain ascetic practice, where it became interpreted as men leaving behind, and even repelling, the worldly realm of women in

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<sup>6</sup> Murai Yonago 村井米子, “Yama no nyonin kinsei” 山の女人禁制, *Josei to keiken* 女性と経験 1 (April 1956): 44–48; and “Zoku, yama no nyonin kinsei” 続、山の女人禁制, *Josei to keiken* 女性と経験 4 (Nov. 1956): 25–28.

<sup>7</sup> Miyake, *Shugendō jiten* 修験道辞典 (Tokyo: Tōkyōdō, 1986), 294–295.

order to train in the otherworldly realm of female mountain gods. Miyake's conception of female mountain gods drew from contemporaries Makita Shigeru 牧田茂 and Miyata Noboru 宮田登.<sup>8</sup> Makita explained female exclusion in terms of an ancient Japanese folk belief that jealous female deities inhabited mountains. Miyata proposed that female shamans, who later became equated with female mountain gods, performed religious rites in the mountains, but their power diminished as male ascetics came to monopolize the mountain, to the point that they were chased out of the mountains altogether. Miyata further argued that male-created religious rites connected to agriculture gave rise to female taboos and eventually the notion of blood pollution.

Miyake's comprehensive study of Ōminesan Shugendō, the 1988 *Ōmine shugendō no kenkyū* 大峰修験道の研究 (*Ōmine Shugendō Research*), included a short section on female exclusion, recounting the history of the practice in four pages then transitioning to a much longer discussion of ideological aspects, such as the symbolism of female mountain gods.

Itō Sanae 伊東早苗, a female student of Miyake, wrote an M.A. thesis at Keiō University also in 1988 titled, “Ōminesan no nyonin kinsei – Dorogawa kawa noboriguchi wo chūshin ni” 大峰山の女人禁制—洞川側登り口を中心に (“Ōminesan's Female Exclusion—with focus on the Dorogawa-side ascent”). Itō's relatively short work, which was never published, expanded Iwashina and Miyake's analyses further by including interviews with local residents.

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<sup>8</sup> Makita Shigeru 牧田茂, *Kami to onna no minzokugaku* 神と女の民俗学 (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1981), esp. 45–47; Miyata Noboru 宮田登, *Onna no reiryoku to ie no kami* 女の霊力と家の神 (Kyoto: Jinbun Shoin, 1979), esp. 65.

In 1990, historian Ushiyama Yoshiyuki, who I discuss in the introduction, traced the origins of female exclusion in the earliest organized monastic communities in Japan in the sixth century. Roughly one decade later, historians Katsuura Noriko and Taira Masayuki emphasized purity and pollution discourses and trace the phenomenon to the ninth or tenth century. Taira situates women's restrictions in the context of Kamakura-period debates about women's salvation and views restrictions as a vestige of these philosophical discourses; these converged with discourse about pollution sometime around the ninth-century.<sup>9</sup> Taken together, these considerations explained for Taira the rise of women's general exclusion from mountains. Katsuura directed attention away from fixed-origin explanations like Ushiyama's, considering female exclusion a "composite religious phenomenon" involving Buddhist and local gods, practitioners, and notions of purity and pollution.<sup>10</sup>

Suzuki Masataka, cultural anthropology, folklore, and religious studies scholar, re-presented and reconsidered many of Miyake's arguments. Suzuki linked the rise of gender-based restrictions with the crystallization of gender roles in the agricultural realm. Suzuki argues that once mountain ascetics disseminated the belief that mountains housed powerful female mountain gods, who offered protection if purity was upheld, a stigma arose concerning their associating with women. Suzuki's 225-page monograph *Nyonin kinsei*, published in 2002, devotes roughly fifty pages on the history of female exclusion at Ōminesan. As with Miyake, Suzuki's predominant focus is ideology and symbolism. Apart from material published by a citizen's group seeking to open the mountain to women (*Motomeru kai*), no major Japanese scholarship has been published since 2002.

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<sup>11</sup> Specifically, Taira cited the "five hindrances" and "male transformation," as noted in the introduction.

<sup>10</sup> Katsuura, "Women and Views of Pollution," 31.

Several recent studies in English of Japanese religions touch on the matter of female exclusion. Bernard Faure devotes a chapter to the exclusion of women from (Buddhist) sacred spaces in his 2003 *The Power of Denial*.<sup>11</sup> Faure introduces major premodern texts, prominent characters (e.g., Toran, Kūkai’s mother), and associated symbolics (e.g. the *kekai* stone). D. Max Moerman crafts a helpful survey of premodern sources related to female exclusion at sacred mountains in chapter five of his 2005 study on Kumano. Gaynor Sekimori’s 2006 article, “Sacralizing the Border: The Engendering of Liminal Space,” introduces beliefs and practices associated with female exclusion, women’s halls and “veneration from afar” sites, and purity/pollution discourses. Sekimori also devotes a section to the contemporary situation at Ōminesan, re-presenting some material from earlier works by Miyake and Suzuki, then elaborating with original research based on local sources and interviews in Dorogawa. Finally, Heather Blair briefly discusses female exclusion in her 2015 study of Heian-period pilgrimage to Ōminesan (then called Kinpusen). Blair recognizes divergent origin theories—specifically, Ushiyama’s precepts approach and Katsuura’s purity and pollution interpretation—and touches on narrative accounts (e.g., the nun Toran). In Blair’s view, the ban served as “an attempt to enforce the radical alterity of the mountains.”<sup>12</sup>

This study of female exclusion at Ōminesan owes a heavy debt to the work of earlier scholars. Its critical groundwork and valuable contributions must be acknowledged. So also must its lacunae. First, the literature is dominated by theoretical and ideological methodologies. Previous works attempt to retrospectively construct social

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<sup>11</sup> Faure, *The Power of Denial*, esp. 219–249.

<sup>12</sup> Blair, *Real and Imagined*, 49.

and historical paradigms in order to account for the present-day existence of female exclusion, but they do so based on little concrete evidence. The disconnect between narrative frameworks, which construct largely fictionalized ideologies, and historical realities, which establish and codify customs, highlights the need for more site-specific historical research. Second, although a relatively robust body of research exists on the exclusionary discourses that prevent women from participating in religious practices and from entering sacred spaces, the extent to which exclusion itself functions to create space for alternative practices remains underexplored. The ongoing focus on what women have been prevented from doing (i.e., exclusion) prevents us from understanding what they actually did (i.e., inclusion). This historiographical extension of female exclusion is deeply embedded and stands to be corrected.

Moving from critique to praise, I wish to acknowledge three excellent case studies. Sherry Fowler, a Japanese Buddhist art historian, examined the practice of female inclusion at Murōji 室生寺, a mountain temple in Nara Prefecture long recognized as “Women’s Kōya” (*Nyonin Kōya*).<sup>13</sup> Fowler investigates why Murōji was touted as an alternative site and how it became known as such. Based on such evidence as site-specific textual records, inscriptionary evidence found inside Murōji’s five-storied pagoda, and wooden votive plaques with designs of women’s breasts, Fowler sketches a fascinating view of women’s worship practices at the mountain from the eighteenth century.

Yamaguchi Kōjun 山口興順, a medieval Tendai 天台 Buddhism scholar, explored the history of female exclusion from the tenth century a Tendai-affiliated

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<sup>13</sup> Sherry Fowler, “Setting Foot on the Mountain: Mt. Murō as a Women’s Alternative to Mt. Kōya,” *Asian Journal of Women’s Studies* 3, no. 4 (1997): 2–73.

temple, Engyōji 円教寺, at Mt. Shosha (*Shoshazan* 書写山) in Hyōgo Prefecture 兵庫県.<sup>14</sup> Yamaguchi argued that the ban on women at Shoshazan developed largely in response to imperial decrees and orders that denoted a mountain or temple's royal connections, but that rule and reality were often at odds. For Yamaguchi, female exclusion denotes less a substantial and expansive practice—even if certain records note it as such—than a conceptual phenomenon that materialized at specific locales based on power relationships.

Miyazaki Fumiko 宮崎ふみ子, scholar of Japanese history and religion, presents female exclusion at Fujisan as a “phenomenon particular to the Tokugawa period.”<sup>15</sup> Her case study examines the interplay of factors and variety of voices involved in the establishment and breakdown of women's barriers at the mountain, paying particular attention to the often-tumultuous dynamic between associations of lay believers, local communities, and the female pilgrims themselves. According to Miyazaki, Fujisan's policy of female exclusion had been contested since the Tokugawa period by lay guilds of men and women (*Fujikō* 富士講), beginning with the lay ascetic Jikigyō Miroku 食行身禄 (1671–1733). Jikigyō hailed from a line of lay Fujisan ascetics tracing back to Kakugyō 角行 (d. 1646), men who were to some degree affiliated with shrines and proselytizers (*oshi* 御師) at the mountain yet also independent practitioners. Jikigyō and his followers, male and female, criticized Buddhist and other discourses on the women's bodily pollution (from menstruation and childbirth in particular) and on these grounds actively challenged the ban at

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<sup>14</sup> Yamaguchi Kōjun 山口興順, “Shoshazan no nyonin kekkai ni tsuite – ‘Chinsō shi kikigaki’ no kiji o chūshin ni” 書写山の女人結界について—「鎮増私聞書」の記事を中心に, *Tendai Gakuhō* 天台学報 46 (2003): 83–89.

<sup>15</sup> Miyazaki, “Female Pilgrims and Mt. Fuji,” 382.

Fujisan.<sup>16</sup> This active contestation led to a rise in women climbing Fujisan both before and after 1860, when the ban was lifted. Miyazaki also points out the economic benefits associated with permitting women's further access—they were paying customers at the mountain. At the same time, and paradoxically, the more women climbed Fujisan the more strictly demarcated points of access became, as guilds and *oshi* negotiated the demands of tradition and tourism.

As Fowler, Yamaguchi, and Miyazaki demonstrate, and the present study emphasizes as well, female exclusion can (and ought to) be studied as part of a dynamic dialogue about places, people, and religious practices and beliefs. Drawing attention to historically contingent agents and arguments will allow us to reveal the localized and highly constructed nature of the practice.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., esp. 348–353.

## Appendix Three:

### 1997 Proclamation on the Decision to Abolish Female Exclusion

#### (Three Mountains Temple Consortium)

##### “Proclamation” (Final Program)<sup>1</sup>

Shugendō, transmitting the light of the Law for thirteen hundred years since the initial opening by its founder En no Gyōja, Ōminesan Sanjōgatake, its original grounds, sustained by the deep faith of a multitude of religious practitioners, protected and inherited as Japan’s leading sacred mountain still today, amidst ever increasing expectations regarding religion, Shugendō, a religion unique to Japan, also welcomes a time in which it must build a role that responds to the demands of this age.

Coincidentally, Shugendō will be able to greet the 1300th Death Anniversary of its founder En no Gyōja in the year 2000, the last year of this century, and on the occasion of this period, Ōminesanji, along with Kinpusenji, Daigoji, Shōgo’in who are deeply involved in its faith, merged with a united front, hand in hand, on the basis of the Death Anniversary. And since last year, we have time and again worked together in cooperation and solidarity in many areas including the carrying out of memorial services and the opening of an exhibition; one of the most serious among those concerns has been the female barrier of Ōminesanji Sanjōgatake and the bold judgment to decide to carry out the elimination of the barrier, set for the En no Gyōja Death Anniversary of 2000 based on the grounds of the following:

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<sup>1</sup> *Shin jidai ni muketa Shugen sanbonsan no kiseki* 新時代に向けた修験三本山の軌跡 (En no Gyōja sen sanbyaku nen go-onki kiroku hensan iinkai 役行者千三百年御遠忌記録編纂委員会, 2003, cited as *Shin jidai* throughout the study), 107.

1. As for Ōminesan Sanjōgatake, because a “female restricted zone” (*nyonin kekkai* 女人結界) has been upheld as a training grounds for male ascetic practitioners, women have not been accepted directly for training, but [women’s] faith has been indirectly involved through men.
2. In recent years, there have been examples of the tradition of female barrier and Shugendō itself boycotting women, but Shugendō, which has since its inception been founded on the basis of lay belief by laymen and lay women, is not a tradition of gender discrimination.
3. Since the modern period (*kindai* 近代), women's direct participation has been conducted inside and outside the mountain, and because women in each Shugendō temple and religious group actively have carried it out, the direct faith and practice of women are rapidly increasing.<sup>2</sup>
4. The religious consciousness of devotees who want to transmit the tradition of female barrier as a training site for men is still deep-seated, and responding to active women’s education in each Shugendō temple and religious group, the request for women's active participation at Ōminesan has increased year by year.
5. Shugendō on the one hand did not directly involve women based on the female barrier, but at the request of people on the other hand—local residents and devotees of this age—is a great tradition that always responds to the times.
6. With En no Gyōja's 1300th Death Anniversary in the year 2000 as an opportunity, Shugendō must respond to the requests based on the faith of the devotees, in a form appropriate for the twenty-first century.

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<sup>2</sup> Definitions of *kindai* are complicated, but here denotes post-World War II.

7. Considering these circumstances, when taking into account the religious demands of ardent female believers, increasing yearly, we have decided to carry out the decision to eliminate the ban on women is a duty our faith achieves, which transmits the dharma light of *shugen*; and Ōminesanji, along with Shōgo'in, Daigoji, and Kinpusenji, who are related to Ōminesan, in union declare the aforementioned decision to eliminate female barrier on May 3, 2000, being the 1300th Death Anniversary of En no Gyōja.

October 3, 1997

「声明文」 (最終案)

修験道は開祖役行者の開創以来千三百年の法灯を伝え、その根本道場たる大峯山山上ヶ岳はあまたの登拝修行者の篤い信仰に支えられて、今日もなお日本有数の霊山として護持継承してきたが、世は心の時代といわれてすでに久しく、二十一世紀という新時代を目前に、宗教に対する期待は益々増大する中、日本独特の宗教である修験道もまたその時代の要求に応じた役割を構築していかなければならない時を迎えている。

奇しくも修験道は今世紀最後の年、西暦二千年に開祖役行者の千三百年御遠忌を迎えることになり、この期に際して大峯山寺が、その信仰に深く関わる聖護院、醍醐寺、金峯山寺と共に、役行者の御遠忌のもとに手を携え大同団結するところとなった。そして昨年来、法要の執行や展覧会の開催等多くの分野での協調と連帯の作業を重ねてきたが、その中でも最も重大な協議の一つ、大峯山山上ヶ岳の女人結界に関して、大英断を以て臨むところとなり

、下記の事由によって西暦二千年の役行者御遠忌を期して、結界の撤廃を行うことを決定した。

1. 大峰山山上ヶ岳は男性修行者の行場として女人結界が守られてきたため、修行としては女性を直接には受け入れてこなかったが、信仰は男性を介して間接的に関わってきた。
2. 昨今、女人結界の伝統や修験道そのものが女性を排斥してきたかの如き扱いを受ける事例もあるが、修験道は開創以来、役行者の遺風によって在家信仰、優婆塞優婆夷信仰を本分としており、もとより男女の差別をするものではない。
3. 近代以降、山の内外で直接的な女性参加が行われてきており、とりわけ各修験寺院や教団内の女性への対応が積極的に行われてきた結果、女性の直接的な信仰や修行は急増している。
4. 男性行者の行場として女人結界の伝統を守り伝えたいとする信者内の宗教意識はまだ根強いものがあるも、各修験寺院や教団の積極的な女性への教化に呼応して、大峯山に対する女性の直接的な参加の要求は年々高まっている。
5. 修験道は一面では女人結界によって直接的な女性との関わりを持たなかったが、一方、その時代時代の信仰者や地域住民など民衆の要求に、常に応えてきたというのも大きな伝統である。
6. 西暦二千年に迎える役行者千三百年御遠忌を機縁として、修験道は、来るべき二十一世紀に即した相応しい形で、信仰者の信仰上の要求に応えていかなければならない。

7. これらの状況を勘案し、さらに年々高まる女性信徒の熱烈なる信仰的要望を鑑みるとき、女人結界撤廃の英断を行うことが修験の法灯を守り伝える我々の信仰上果たすべき役割と決し、大峯山寺並びに大峯山関わる聖護院、醍醐寺、金峯山寺が大同一致し、役行者千三百年御遠忌年（西暦二千年）の開扉式・五月三日を期して、女人結界の撤廃を決し、右声明する。

平成九年十月三日

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## Fieldwork

Asamura Todonobu 浅村朋伸. June 14, 2015–November 2015. Various locations.

Kino Hiromichi 紀埜弘道. March 1, 2014; May 2–5, 2014; July 17–18, 2014, August 1–4, 2014; September 22–23, 2014; May 3–4, 2015; August 2–4, 2015; September 22–23, 2015. Dorogawa 洞川.

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Okada Echio 岡田悦雄. May 3, 2015. Ryūsenji 龍泉寺, Dorogawa 洞川.

Tatsumi Ryōnin 巽良仁. November 9, 2014. Sakuramotobō 桜本坊, Yoshino 吉野.

Note: this list includes formal interviews and personal communication with individuals who agreed to disclose their names; the study also includes information drawn from interviews with and conversations with people who requested that their names not be disclosed.