Negotiating Narratives of the Past,   Modernity, and Identity:
A Techno-Pilgrimage to a Sacred Mountain in Japan

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Introduction

Coping with rapid technological changes and globalisation has been a subject of particular concern for many developing and non-Western regions as they attempt to maintain or re-image local systems of knowledge and belief. The stresses wrought by these changes have often led to ruptures in traditional patterns of life while raising many questions about the stresses of modernity and the threat of its more spurious manifestations, particularly those guided by the commercial and political marketing of "invented traditions." In this paper I examine a recent heritage preservation project to commemorate a pre-modern mountain religion in the Northern Japan Alps that had been dissolved after Japan opened to the West in 1868 and embarked on a path of rapid modernization and building a strong nation. Once the site of a Buddhist temple complex which administered and promoted a local mountain religion which peaked in activity during the Edo period (1603-1868), the current site of heritage preservation (museum, theater and outdoor park) presents an innovative attempt to mend the disjuncture between a pre-modern religious tradition and the high-tech realities and affluence which typifies modern Japan.

I will begin by outlining a few key concepts which have functioned in the historic development of the mountain religious tradition as well as its reanimation today. I will proceed with a descriptive overview of the museum complex (museum, theater, and Mandala Park) and focus specifically on the employment of innovative narrative and spatial strategies, and modern materials in order to give new life to traditional beliefs. Woven throughout this paper I will also elaborate on how the modern interpretations of the past traditions have depended upon a dynamic interplay of accommodation and resistance between past and modern culture, national and local identities. Rather than viewing culture or tradition as a static entity that is bounded exclusively to pre-existing spaces or a group, it is more useful to consider the encounters and tensions between different agents which negotiate and construct culture and identity through space. As Stuart Hall states:

> 'a culture' is never a simple, unified entity, but always has to be thought of as composed of similarities and differences, continuities and new elements, marked by ruptures and always crosscut by difference. Its meanings are the result of a constant, ongoing process of cultural negotiation which is constantly shifting and changing its contours to accommodate continuing tensions.[1]

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[1] Hall, Stuart. 1995. "New Cultures for Old." In *A Place in the World*. Massey. D. and Jess, P. (eds.) Oxford: Oxford University Press. p.185
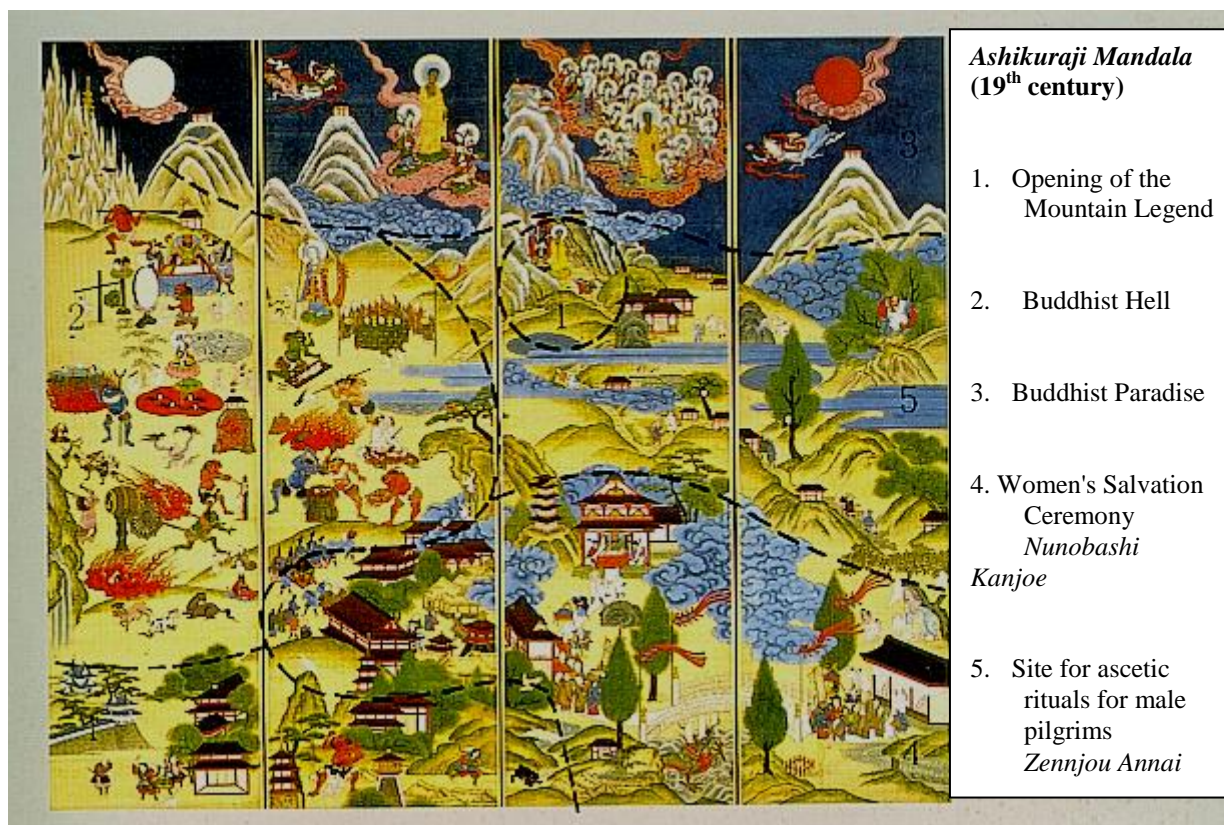
Illustration 1.
Descriptive Overview of the Tateyama Mountain Religion

As the Tateyama Museum commemorates a local mountain religion and features as its focal

point the Tateyama mandala paintings, I would like to begin with it as a frame through which to

consider two processes of cultural reproduction: "mandalization" and syncretism. As seen in

illustration 1, the mandala is a pictorial representation of the Tateyama mountains, in addition to

a religious text that delineates sacred and profane space for ritual salvation from a Buddhist Hell

to Paradise. The Ashikuraji Mandala, which was painted in the 19th century, is just one of

numerous and stylistically diverse mandala used as an instructive text by travelling missionaries

of the Tateyama mountain religion to encourage pilgrims to the mountain, an activity which

peaked in popularity during the Edo period (1603-1868).[2] The mandala, anchored in its

essential connection to memorializing Buddhahood and sacred space is a powerful yet flexible

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[2] Many studies have closely linked pilgrimage and travel/tourism in Japan. See Graburn, Nelson. 1983.
To Pray, Pay, and Play: The Cultural Structure of Japanese Domestic Tourism. Aix-en-Provence: Centre
des Hautes Etudes Touristiques, and Formanek, Suzanne. 1998. "Pilgrimage in the Edo Period:
Forerunner of Modern Domestic Tourism? The example of the Pilgrimage to Mount Tateyama." In *The
Culture of Japan as Seen through its Leisure*. Linhart, Sepp. And Fruhstrunck, Sabine (eds.) New York:
State University of New York Press.

form which has spawned a variety of creative manifestations through time and context, including the

assimilation of folk religious notions that mountains are sacred spaces of the afterlife.[3]

The process of "mandalization" has primarily been associated with the transformation of the mandala onto geographic space (ie. mountains).[4] Yet this concept is a helpful tool to understanding mimicry, and   miniaturization, as well as the latest manifestations of the mandala within the modern Tateyama Museum complex. Beyond a literal or physical notion of sacred space, the reproduction of the mandalic form today serves as a memorial, or mnemonic device to denote a remanent of an authentic source or history. Though a modern day visitor to a heritage sites assumes a secular and less-disciplined approach than the rigorous practice of a religious ascetic, it is argued that the tourist and pilgrim are linked by a search for historical traces of an origin, or a sign of something that is, or once was sacred or of special meaning. [5]

By looking closely at the illustration of the mandala, we can see examples of the syncretic processes, assimilation and layering of religious traditions from both within and outside of the local region. The mandala depicts several folk legends such as the official opening of the mountain for Buddhist worship (section one), and of course the predominant scene of a Buddhist Paradise in the most upper portion of the mandala (section three). I would like to elaborate on one of the most prominent deities in the mandala which originates from outside of a standard Buddhist doctrine.[6] The female folk deity of the mountain, *ombasama*, who in the guise of the Buddhist "cloth-stripping crone", sits in the bottom right portion of the

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[3] The original template of the mandala as sacred space is based on the burial stupas of the Buddha.   As Buddhism spread so did the need for replicated sacred sites of worship and therefore a process of re-imagining the sacred, reflecting regional sensibilities and creativity, resulted in new architectural and artistic forms: pagodas, temple-city complexes,   monuments such as Borobudur in Indonesia, and a wide range of paintings such as Tibetan mandalas.

[4] See Grapard, Alan. 1993. "Flying Mountains and Walkers of Emptiness: Sacred Space in Japanese Religions." In *The Sacred Mountains of Asia*, Einarsen, John, (ed.) Boston: Shambhala Publications.

[5] I am indebted to Grapard here as well for his conceptualization of a spatial orientation he has termed, "geopiety," which is a more secularized version of space for religious practice. Grapard, Alan. 1994. "Geosophia, Geohnosis, and Geopiety: Orders of Significance in Japanese Representations of Space." In *NowHere: Space, Time and Modernity*. Friedland, Roger. (ed) Berkeley: University of California Press.

[6] Buddhism arrived in Japan primarily from the 6th century from China via the Korean peninsula.

mandala (section four).[7] Besides being loosely associated with *Izanami*, the mythological female progenitor of the Japanese islands and its deities, the *ombasama* is also the key figure in the Buddhist women's salvation ritual, the Cloth Covered Bridge Ceremony (*Nunobashi Kanjoe*), which is featured in the same section of the mandala. The hierarchical traditions of Confucianism, along with the patriarchical institutional functions of Buddhism imported from the continent gradually imposed social sanctions on women reflected through religious traditions, which is in contrast to what is known of pre-Buddhist Japanese social conditions which were more matriarchical.[8] The ban which prevented women from entering the sacred space of the mountain and restriction of their salvation only after death is an example of this Buddhist tradition. Though these points are not at all explicitly made in the museum, the identification of this deity today at the museum, as the *ombasama*, rather than an exclusive Buddhist interpretation, "the cloth-stripping crone", may also be understood in terms of an interest to identify the origins of Japanese tradition. Though the on-going syncretic processes have obscured an "authentic" origin, the search for an indigenous Japanese source is a link in the much larger ideological chain of the nationalization of Japan during the modern period.

While the proscription against women is just a single example of the hegemony of Buddhism, religious traditions throughout Japan have also remarkably maintained strong elements of local color and uniqueness primarily because of the relative accommodation to the local. The overall religious landscape in Japan is remarkably diverse due to its enduring folk culture and also perhaps can be owed to a very strong sense of place anchored to unique and sacred sites in nature, like for example sacred mountains. The Tateyama Mountain religion therefore is an amalgam of a local, regional, and transregional negotiation of practice and belief, (various forms of Buddhism, folk religion, and Shinto elements) which may share some characteristics with other mountain traditions, yet is primarily unique in its own composition of ritual practice, and sites of worship.

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[7] The "cloth stripping crone" *datsuiba,* is very likely a Buddhist appropriation of folk religious worship of a female mountain deity. There is a wide range of folk legends in Japan of the mountain witch, *yamamba* which also must have connections to the frightening "cloth stripping crone," who weighs the clothes of the dead to determine their deeds and sins during their life.

[8] The Sun Goddess, Amaterasu, is the key deity around which Japanese mythology revolves. According to Chinese documentation of ancient Japan, the earliest Imperial tradition there was centered around female shamanic figures.

The importation of the concept of Hell raises a question as to how locality appropriates a sign or belief system. The Buddhist Hell, depicted in the left hand portion of the mandala (section 2), obviously provided a fantastic visual metaphor for the spirits and the torments of ancestoral spirits in the mountain, which fit well into native notions of the supernatural. Yet the specific ideology of judgement and the cosmic law of Buddhism, which was a Chinese elaboration, has not been so easily grafted onto indigenous religious tradition in Japan. The Judge of Hell who sits at the top of Hell in the mandala still is dressed in its original Chinese garb after centuries since its import into Japan. This aspect of the Buddhist cosmology of Hell is a fine example of the attention to maintaining an original form when appropriating a foreign element into the local context, when a prior model does not exist. Although it may be tempting to map an actual belief in Hell through ritual or visual symbols, this is a difficult proposition to prove especially in the Japanese context. Ideologically, while the threat of going to Hell for doing bad deeds was an effective form of "redemptive hegemony" by Buddhists, and one in which surely some people came to believe, the concept of reincarnation or a strict interpretation of Hell has not been widely adopted or forced on the Japanese.[9] While Hell is conceived as a space of judgement, it is also a passage before progressing to Paradise, and has served as a particularly vivid metaphor for the ascetic practice of pilgrims. More broadly or at least in a modern sense, they may also represent the "Hells" that all human beings must live through and struggle to get beyond in *this* life.

Though Shinto has served a far less significant role in religious ideological functions until the modern period (1868~), it is also present in the mandala in the far left portion of section four.[10] Though lacking a central religious or moral ideology, Shinto is primarily focused around the sacredness of nature and has functioned primarily for the administration of community festivals, ceremonies and rituals associated with folk beliefs. Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples have coexisted and mingled for centuries, each recognizing or acknowledging

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[9] As there is no single, specific system of belief regarding Hell, especially prevalent in the modern period, this ambiguity allows the Japanese more freedom to interpret or imagine on their own what the afterworld may be. The concept of "redemptive hegemony" has been elaborated upon by Catherine Bell in *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1995.

[10] Shinto is the institutional side of folk religion and developed primarily as a defensive response to the overwhelming influx of Buddhism into Japan from the 6th century. Kuroda, Toshio. 1981. "Shinto in the History of Japanese Religion." In *Journal of Japanese Studies* 7:1-21

the other's deities as manifestations of their own. From the Meiji period however, the emergence of state Shinto, as opposed to local sect Shinto, served to promote the official ideology of the modern state, the construction of national identity to mobilize people for state objectives.[11] It is important to mention here that the religious manipulations of the modern state, which privileged native Shinto over the "foreign" Buddhism, is still a latent ideological feature of modern Japan and the on-going construction or reproduction of a national-cultural consciousness.

Ironically however, it was the Meiji policy of separating Shinto from Buddhism (*shimbutsu bunri*) that dismantled and virtually destroyed the mountain religious practice at Tateyama that had flourished particularly in the later half of the Edo period.[12] The mandalas and the religious accoutrements were sold off, Buddhist priests moved, retired or joined their Shinto counterparts. After one hundred and thirty years of vast changes in Japan, the losses of modernity have become a new object for the restoration of idealized pre-modern values on the one hand, and an ongoing maintenance of a modern national identity on the other. This is the context in which the Tateyama Museum, and numerous other heritage attractions around Japan

The Tateyama Museum of Toyama Guide
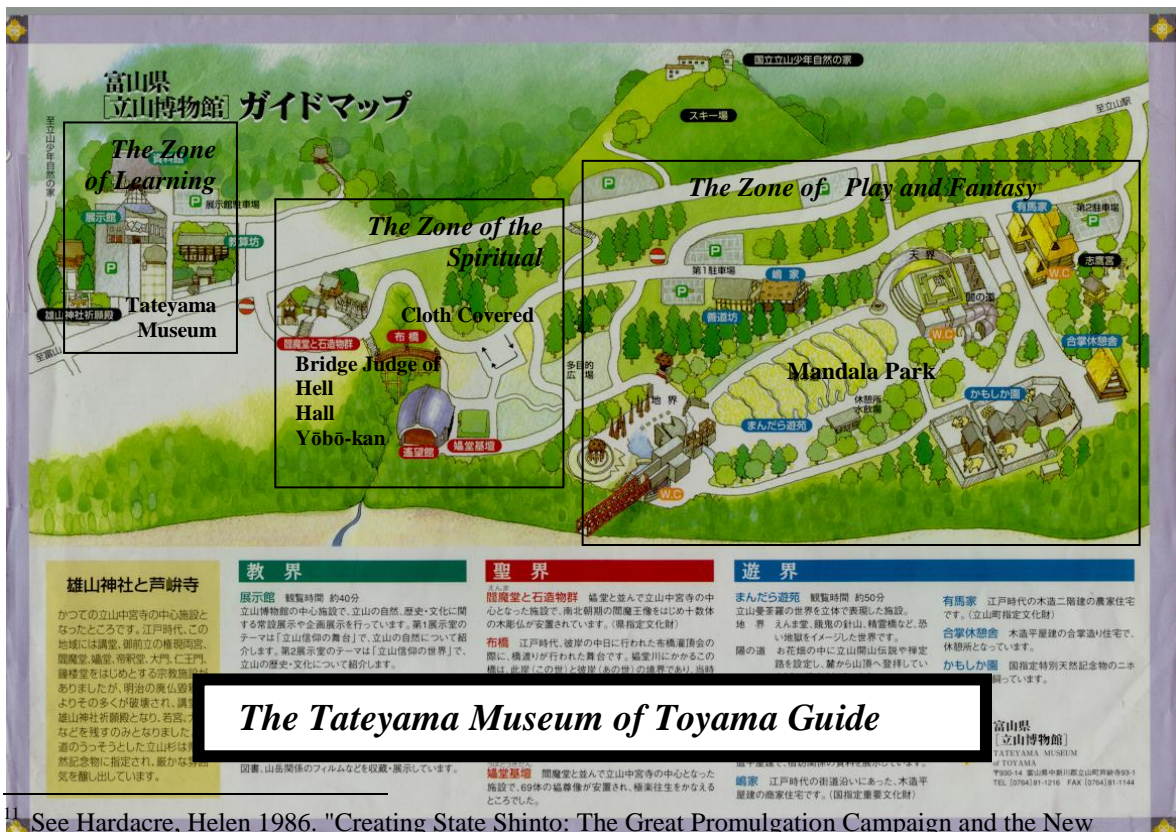
[11] See Hardacre, Helen 1986. "Creating State Shinto: The Great Promulgation Campaign and the New Religions." In *Journal of Japanese Studies* 12.1

[12] Grapard, Alan. 1984. "Japan's Ignored Cultural Revolution: The Separation of Shinto and Buddhist Divinities in Meiji (*shimbutsu bunri*) and a Case Study: Tonomine." In *History of Religions* 23:3.

Illustration 2.

have emerged particularly since the 1980's.[13] So today the Tateyama Mountain religion is being

resuscitated and enjoying a new life for similar aims: to discover the heart of national values and

identity which might be on the verge of being lost.

Museum

An introductory description in English in one of the museum guides provides some context of

the aim and purpose of the museum:

> Mt. Tateyama, one of the most holy mountains in Japan, can best be understood in three ways;
> by knowing its natural history, by studying the religious faith of people and by imaging the
> spiritual world that exists in the wild mountain areas. Mt. Tateyama has a wild nature of
> mysterious landscapes and formations produced by glacial, peri-glacial and volcanic activities.
> The mountain's nature resists changes by people The power of nature is both a blessing and a
> danger to people It has however inspired a primitive faith among the people and has grown in
> Mountain Worship and the adoption of Shinto and Buddhism. Through all times, people have
> been supported (throughout) their lives by the spirit of mother nature. Tateyama Museum of
> Toyama presents not only the history of Mt. Tateyama and information about Mr. Tateyama,
> but also provides keys for people to live better lives today.[14]

By looking at the map of the museum complex (illustration 2) you can see that the Tateyama

Museum, Yōbō-kan Theater and the Mandala Park are situated throughout the village of

Tateyama, which corresponds to section four of the Ashikuraji Mandala. As noted on the map

of museum exhibits, there are three conceptual zones wherein the museum exhibits have been

built: the "Zone of Learning," the "Zone of the Spiritual" and the "Zone of Play and Fantasy."

Though these are not administrated as religious spaces, they represent a "mandalization" of

religious space, re-contextualized in a modern material culture and ideology.

The usual starting point for visitors is the museum which is located in the "Zone of

Learning." Quite unlike heritage preservation projects that may retreat exclusively into

traditional architecture to evoke a native Japanese past and an idealized rural home town

(*furusato*), the modern museum at Tateyama is the epitome of late 20th century architectural

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[13] Numerous studies on Japanese domestic tourism, heritage preservation and a nostalgia for the past have
been published particularly in the last ten years. See Ivy, M. 1995. *Discourses of the Vanishing*.
Chicago: University of Chicago Press; Kelly, W. 1986. "Rationalization and Nostalgia: Cultural
Dynamics of New Middle-class Japan." *American Ethnologist* 13.4; Moon, Okpyo. 1989. *From Paddy
Field to Ski Slope*. Manchester: Manchester University Press; Knight, John. 1993. "Rural Kokusaika?
Foreign Motifs and Village Revival in Japan." In *Japan Forum* 5.2; Robertson, Jennifer. 1991. *Native and
Newcomer: Making and Remaking a Japanese City*. Berkeley: University of California Press.,
Schattschneider, Ellen. 1996. "The Labor of Mountains." In *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique*
(Durham) Spring 1996:1-30.
[14] From Toyama Ken, *Tateyama Hakubutsukan Sōgō Annai*. [Guide Book of Tateyama Museum of
Toyama.] 1997; 71-72.

form and materials. Designed by famed architect Isozaki Arata, and employing modern materials and design, the building is made to be a visual symbol of natural forms, and a means to structure the flow of visitors through the exhibits. Appropriate to the museum's theme, the building evokes the mountain by its conical shape, and its glass pyramid perched at the very top.

There are three major exhibit spaces in the museum, one devoted to the natural history of the mountain, one to the history of the mountain religion, and one for special exhibits. As for the area devoted to the mountain religion, the collection includes a wide range of documents, relics, costumes, utensils used by priests and pilgrims, bronze statues of Buddhist deities, a reproduction in miniature of the women's salvation ceremony, a depiction of the cave associated with the opening of the mountain legend and a corner showcasing Hell. A separate room contains an impressive collection of approximately a dozen wooden sculptures of the *ombasama*. Another key feature of the museum is the collection of mandala which are displayed in several cases and in a model tatami straw mat room. Visitors can activate a recorded explanation of the mandala which simultaneously spotlights the sections being described. Though the primarily Buddhist orientation of the religion is evident in the museum, as already mentioned in the context of syncretic development of the religion, signs of the folk religion, such as the *ombasama*, and Shinto are also present.

Once leaving the museum, most visitors walk down the street toward the Yōbō-kan Theater. It is located in the "Zone of the Spiritual," a space tied to specific religious sites, such as the Buddhist Judge of Hell Hall, the Cloth Covered Bridge, a vast village cemetery, and the Old Woman's (ceremonial meditation) Hall. Currently the Judge of Hell Hall contains many relics including four small *ombasama* which flank an enormous and frightening statue of the Judge of Hell. This temple continues to be used by the local people where rites and village ceremonies are held. The Cloth Covered Bridge is a reproduction of the original (*Nunobashi Kanjoe*). The modern Yōbō-kan Theater is located directly in front of the place where the Old Women's Hall once stood. Though mixing interpretive genres throughout the museum complex may risk creating a "touristic side show" of otherwise religious local spaces, this is not the case here. Visitors are plainly aware of how to behave in these different contexts and are familiar with the mosaic of past-present cultural space which is typical throughout Japan. A

visitor would be aware that they are entering a space of local religious practice, yet as it is a national heritage, it would not be considered exclusively local, and perfectly acceptable for them to visit.

The Cloth Covered Bridge is a long arched wooden structure which spans a small narrow gap which feeds a small stream. The bridge and stream symbolize the space which marks off the world of the secular (or profane), and that of the sacred other world. It was here that the traditional women's salvation ceremony took place and from here after crossing the bridge that they would enter the Old Women's Hall. Praying to the *ombasama* from within the darkened Hall, they would achieve a ritual salvation and contemplate Paradise by looking out upon the mountains. As one crosses the bridge, rising up the arch, one gradually sees a vast graveyard before entering the Yōbō-kan Theater. The cemetery located at the base of the mountain is the traditional clan grave site, marking off the spiritual home place of an entire family and extended kin groups. It also marks that division between this world and the next, and the space from where the ghosts of the clan's ancestors will reside, according to folk belief. It was also the line demarcating the place beyond which women were not allowed to go, except for the ceremonial women's salvation ritual in the Old Women's Hall (*uba-do*). Even for the many Japanese who have no knowledge of these associations, the museum exhibits, which have been strategically located and anchored to historically relevant spaces, provide the visitor with not only textual reminders but a physical and spatial re-animation of such cultural knowledge. The associations conjured up at this site, due to the careful planning by the museum, clearly authenticates and deepens one's connection to an enduring origin of traditional practice.

Theater

One of the most powerful exhibits in the whole complex is the film, *New Tateyama Mandala*.[15] It transposes the narrative of the mandala onto a multiple film screen, evoking the multiple scrolled mandala. The film is a vivid fantasy using the most advanced animation techniques to capture the opening of the mountain legend, a variety of local folk stories and beliefs, the women's salvation ceremony over the Cloth Covered Bridge, and a shocking story of Hell. As

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[15] Produced by Tatsuo Shimamura, a Tokyo animation and commercial film maker. Mr. Shimamura is President of the multimedia company, Shirogumi Inc. in Tokyo, Japan.

the quality of the film is impressive it is with regret that I do not have the space here to detail each scene of the film. What however I will focus on is the final section which deals with the concept of the otherworld of Hell and a new contextualization of the religion within modernity.

This concluding section of the film features a story about a man being judged in Hell. In it a man who is dressed in Edo style clothing has died and is awaiting judgement. The man stands before the Judge of Hell, and pathetically denies that he has done anything bad in life. The man's arguing with the Judge of Hell is no use, for the Judge calls for "the mirror" wherein the man should look back at himself and the world he lived as a human. Scenes of the man stealing something here, killing someone there, and raping a woman over there, are responded to by the man with howls and gasps of disbelief. The judge says, "You know what will happen to you if you tell lies?" The sinner's furtive request for forgiveness is too late. A demon-assistant to the Judge forces the man to stick out his tongue which he then rips out.[16] The man is then dropped into a pit where he starts falling into a new type of Hell.

The intensely shocking scenes which have led up to the man's punishment are momentarily interrupted by the sinner's descent into Hell and with the voice of the narrator who returns us to the present, and a futuristic world. It is here that the narrative situates the Hell of the mountain religion within a decisively modern context, a modern urban Hell. The Edo period man lands into these modern and future Hells, walking around in a horrified daze. While traversing animated scenes of apocalyptic urban "Hells" of extreme pollution, overcrowding, dark dingy alleyways, poverty, sickness and suffering, the commentary is translated as follows:

> It is 100 years since the Tateyama Mandala's world has disappeared from this world. During this time, Japan has changed very much. The artificial light has wiped out the darkness, and people are feeling drunk with a materialistic culture's convenience. The rice fields and other fields are being destroyed, the oceans are being degraded, trees are being cut down, mountains are shovelled away, and castles of desire and prosperity continue to be built. Inside the labyrinth of iron and concrete, humans fight and battle. The sorrow of aging, the sorrow of being sick, the terror of death… Many times there is repeated destruction and there is still more environmental destruction… Disasters… Riots… Wars… In Tateyama Mandala, you can become terrified by seeing closely the deep sins of humankind, you can see closely this world's Hells….the present human Hell.[17]

After the appearance of the Buddha which is the sign for one's salvation, the narrator continues:

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[16] Nearly all Japanese children have heard this threat of punishment which will await them in Hell.
[17] *Shin Tateyama Mandara Ezu* [*New Tateyama Mandala*] Scripted by Tateyama Museum. 1991. Directed and produced by Shimamura Tatsuo (Shirogumi Inc.)

It is easy to consider this kind of Mandala world as a myth or imagination. But if you think of this as the wisdom as to how to live a human life. Wisdom reached by our ancestors. If you think of it that way, you can see a fresh bright light. Human beings definitely die within a 100 year period. The philosophy of reincarnation grasps this tiny human's life within a much larger dynamic or continuum. The world takes an extremely long time building up and then diminishing and continuing this cycle. The view or scientific philosophy of space and the universe is surprisingly similar to the Mandala World. The Tateyama Mandala World will continue to ask, "What is human kind?" and "What is spiritual salvation?"[18]

The three large screens, which have been the framed scrolls for this new, high-tech mandala, eventually fade to black and then quietly creep up the wall, rolling up to the ceiling. As the screens move up, the hall is filled with light and finally a gorgeous vista of mountains is revealed to the audience. In this final act, the ritual viewing of mountains links the "gaze" of the modern audience to that of the participants of the women's salvation ceremony, 130 years earlier, who experienced a similar view of the mountain paradise after a period of confinement in the Old Women's Hall to chant and pray.[19]

In contrast to the somewhat lifeless display of relics in the museum, this film exhibit breathes life back into the mountain religion. When watching the film, the narration effectively teaches the audience not only about historical folklore, but also imparts a decisive morality which is taken as a subconscious, yet important souvenir from the pilgrimage to Tateyama. Whereas the mandala in the museum really does appear like a confounding artefact of a dead mountain religion, the film reanimates the same stories, serving the function of the missionary-story teller (*etoki*), yet speaking to today's audience. While many things have changed over time, such as the secular use of the mountain and the end of the proscriptions against women, the essence of the religion has been updated and made relevant for modern society. The anachronistic characteristics have been shelved as a context of past history, and new elements such as the distopian critique on over-developed, crowed urbanscapes, misuse of technology, environmental exploitation and pollution have made this film entirely relevant to today's audience. Rather then view the religiosity of the message as a didactic fundamentalist approach, which would call for a return to the past without compromise to the modern, the message here is focused on the excesses of modern life and the reminder of potentially lost values and identity, rather than modernity itself. This form of resistance is mediated by the

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[18] ibid.

strategic compromise between the technological and ideological advances of modernity in concert with traditional values. Also, this resistance cannot be interpreted as simply a critique against a Western outside menace, but is primarily targeting the negative signs of increasing consumption and an "empty affluence" within Japan.[20] It is also particularly interesting to consider that this critique was produced not from within the village of Tateyama, but was the creation of a Tokyo film maker and the curator who use the text and traditions of the mountain religion to express their sentiments of dissatisfaction about modern Japan, to other Japanese.

Mandala Park

Once leaving the theater, the visitor will proceed east, toward the "Zone of Play and Fantasy" where the modern heritage attraction, the Mandala Park can be found.[21] The Mandala Park is an outdoor architectural-sculpture park which represents another creative example of mandalization. In contrast to the *New Tateyama Mandala* film, which is communicated very clearly and requires little interpretation by the viewer, the Mandala Park is an artistic space that strings together mnemonic symbols of actual sites in the mountain as well as a cosmological spatial structuring of the religion. A key feature of this park is its extensive use of modern building materials and technology in order to envelope the visitor in the four senses: sight, sound, touch, and smell. The Tokyo architect, Kijou Rokkaku explains that the park was designed to avoid iconographic or realistic images, and fixed views of the "other" worlds.[22] Instead, a variety of technologically complicated sound and smell programs were designed to augment the abstract visual experience. Rather than presenting a static representation of Buddhist cosmological concepts, a driving force for Rokkaku was creating a spatial environment where the imagination would be allowed freedom to roam, experiment, and play with these concepts which reside within the man-made and natural landscape. Rokkaku states that the design facilitates a multi-dimensional experience and interpretation. While engaged in

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[19] A guide in the theater points out this link to the past after the screens roll up.
[20] On the subject of consumption and affluence see,   Clammer, John. 1997. *Contemporary Urban Japan: A Sociology of Consumption*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers. and McCormack, Gavan. *The Emptiness of Japanese Affluence*. New York:M.E. Sharpe Armonk, 1996.
[21] Also within this zone are a small zoo and several restored Edo-period buildings and pilgrimage inns.
[22] From interview in *Mandara Yuen Sōgō Annai* [Mandala Park Guide Book]. 1995. Rokkaku's most recent achievement is the *Budo-kan* in Tokyo, which is a martial arts gymnasium and auditorium.

one's own imagination however, the place implicitly structures the Buddhist concepts of heaven and Hell, recalls local folk legends, and mimics nature through abstract miniatures.

The Mandala Park is made up of four distinct zones of an imaginary afterworld: Hell, Paradise, the Sunny Path, and the Dark Path. Upon entry to the park, the visitor can look out over the landscaped Hell of dark and rusted metal sculptures, bubbling ponds, an assortment of bridges and structures. The Judge of Hell Hall, bearing no resemblance to the actual building located near the Cloth Covered Bridge, is a dark dungeon-like building of metal which is a dark haunted hall of sounds and incense. Throughout the site, technological sensors detect the visitor's approach which will trip various sounds of demons and goblins as one progresses through the maze of Hell. One fascinating interactive part is the Spiral Sand Hell. In the center is what appears to be wishing well where the visitor can gaze into another type of mandala, a gory kaleidoscope of melted eyes, teeth and geometric shapes. If the visitor speaks, their voice is picked up by a microphone and then regenerated into the deep, throaty articulations of a demon which is projected through a loud speaker system in the Spiral Sand Hell.

After crossing a bridge the visitor enters the Sunny Path, a long valley of grass and wild flowers that connects Hell to Paradise. The Sunny Path is scattered with sculptures which in total represent an abstract miniature model of the pilgrimage path from the temple to the mountain top. Though this space does not resemble traditional Japanese gardens, it does incorporate a classic concept of symbolic citation in Japan referred to as *mitate*.[23] In classic religious aesthetics, symbolic articles used as *mitate* serve as votive objects which frame and memorialize a spirit-filled domain. A paradoxical feature of the Sunny Path in particular is that although the park site is completely enveloped by nature, oddly the Sunny Path features artificial smells of nature, incense and other subtle "image" smells designed by the architect.

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[23] *Mitate* are often done in miniature and used in garden design along with *shakkei*, a complementary design technique of using borrowed scenery, like for example a distant background integrated as an element of a small garden design. According to Yamaguchi, *mitate* is "the technique used to associate objects of ordinary life with mythological or classical images." See Yamaguchi, Masao. 1991. "The Poetics of Exhibition in Japanese Culture." In *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, Ivan Karp and Steven Lavine (eds.) Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press. For more on gardens and *shakkei* see, Hendrey, Joy. 1997. "Nature Tamed." In *Japanese Images of Nature: Cultural Perspectives*. Pamela Asquith and Arne Kalland (eds.) Surrey: Curzon Press.

This type of imposition of an urban conceptualization of nature is plainly at odds with the reality of Tateyama, which hardly needs to duplicate the smells of nature.

Paradise and the Dark Path are the final sections of the Mandala Park. It consists of different artistic representations of Heaven, including several individual galleries where artists have installations. Most of Paradise is built indoors where the visitor roams through various rooms. One contains futuristic-looking musical instruments and another contains a huge egg wherein visitors can lie inside, listen to new age music and hear the sound of a heart beat, meant to mimic the feeling of being inside the womb. The Dark Path is the exit which is marked by the sign of the Buddha's footprint. The visitor exits through a dark tunnel which is signified with the five elements of nature: fire, water, sky, wind, earth.

Of all exhibits of the Tateyama Museum, the Mandala Park is the most ambiguous, artistically subjective, an possibly viewed as too trendy or post-modern, mixing a meticulousness and seriousness in its construction, yet a playful and meditative function for its visitors. Though this space has been fastidiously designed, the visitor will probably not be able to acknowledge the designer's efforts easily, as the execution is thoroughly modern and subjective. I was fascinated to learn in an interview with the architect that once a year, he travels to Tateyama to deliver a workshop to local volunteers of the Mandala Park to explain his vision and representations of the mountain religion, so the locals can then in turn explain the site to tourists. Sometimes the locals have asked or questioned his interpretations, however as the Mandala Park is viewed as an artist and subjective instalment rather than a doctrine-based religious site, the local people are relatively open and fascinated with this outsider's urbanesque architectural interpretation of the afterworld.

During interviews with members of the museum staff and volunteers, most responded that the Mandala Park was quite "interesting" and creative. From my experience meeting local volunteers, they seemed very interested in explaining Rokkaku's vision, but were also willing to comment on its inventiveness in distinction from the lived traditions or conservatism in the village. On the other hand, there were more contesting voices coming from both the museum staff and other outsiders concerning how this exhibit would stand the test of time. From an interview with a researcher I learned that though the Mandala Park had been the last exhibit

produced, it also was the one which was most ambiguously conceived by the museum and as a result there was not a consensual response. I was told that the main worry was that this exhibit would be possibly too trendy and eventually become out of date. One insightful critique by an older resident from Toyama City and visitor to the site was the way in which he felt the park was trying to impose an ideology on him. With knitted brow and a scrunched up expression on his face, he said the way he interpreted the park, it was as if they (the museum or architect) were trying to compel or coerce us to accept this map of an inevitable future world through Mandala Park. Obviously to this man who lives in the neighboring city of Toyama, such futuristic sites are hardly the vision he had in mind when returning to the heritage of Tateyama.

The Production of Culture: The National-Local Dialogue

Though it may be assumed that interest in a commemorative museum would have emerged from the village of Tateyama itself, in fact this was not the case. The initial interest in the heritage of Tateyama resulted incidentally from a wider prefectural decision to establish a central museum to showcase the prefecture. Museum production is a phenomenal enterprise throughout Japan, and one by which local regions tend to measure their own reputation and uniqueness based on a comparison with neighboring prefectural heritage sites and museums.[24] The initial design for a central prefectural museum however met with complications during the process because of the widely dispersed sites and collections making it impossible to centralize.

The most instrumental figure behind the establishment of the prefectural museum, centered around Tateyama's heritage, is the current curator, Mr. Yonehara. A retired high school history teacher, principal and historical researcher for the prefectural government, Mr. Yonehara, initiated and garnered significant support for the establishment of the museum both within the prefectural government and among prominent intellectuals in Japan, such as the famed architect, Arata Isozaki. During an interview, Mr. Yonehara was explicit in expressing his regret over the wholesale separation of religious content from school curriculum, a condition which he feels has culturally impoverished the post-war generation of students and has led to a corruption of Japanese values. Though personally not from Tateyama itself, Mr. Yonehara's

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[24] I learned this from the interview with Mr. Yonehara, the curator of the museum complex.

vision is that by reclaiming the heritage of Tateyama, traditional Japanese values and knowledge could be articulated and passed on to successive generations.

Paradoxically, in contrast to the support that was received by colleagues of Mr. Yonehara and intellectuals from outside the prefecture, the people of Tateyama village were initially quite resistant and suspicious of the project and how outsiders would interpret their local history as well as the questionable impact on the village. The fact that Mr. Yonehara was able to patiently cultivate the trust of local people, even with his very creative conceptualization of the exhibits, is a testament to his skills in networking and his very determined belief that the local values had a contemporary national resonance.

The timing of the project, which occurred during the tail end of the economic bubble period in the mid- to late- 1980's was also crucial for getting the project under way with the appropriate financial support. Funding for the museum comes solely from the prefectural government budget. The total start-up costs of the museum complex was five billion yen, or roughly fifty million U.S. dollars. Yearly maintenance for the museum is 300 million yen, or approximately three million U.S. dollars.[25] This is not extra-ordinary when we consider the budgets of larger museums in Japan which could easily be double or triple that of the Tateyama Museum. The enormous investment still begs the question of what financial benefits the prefecture envisioned for the local economy, and how this project has impacted the community and their traditions. With very low ticket prices and poor transportation facilities to the village, there seems to be very little chance for any recuperation of the investment, except perhaps in the form of encouraging indirect local services such as eating establishments, lodgings or souvenir shops.[26] Numbers of tourists are not great and their movement is strategically channelled through the sites which appear not to interfere extensively upon the local region. When asked, Mr. Yonehara was quick to point out that the museum is primarily a research center and devoted

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[25] These figures were provided by the curator, Mr. Yonehara during an interview in June 1999. A full breakdown of start-up and operating costs are also published in annual reports by the museum.
[26] Admission costs can be found on the following web site:
http://www.jeims.co.jp/hotel/oyama/shomyo-e.html   Admission to the all three sites for adults is approximately 8 U.S. dollars, or 6 U.S. dollars for groups.   High school and university students are charged just over 6 U.S. dollars, or 4 U.S. dollars at a group rate.   Elementary and jr. high students are charged 4 U.S. dollars, or approximately 2.50 U.S. dollars as a group. The museum primarily caters to school groups that arrive in buses.   Though rail transportation is quite excellent in Japan, this area is not serviced very well and so the remaining visitors are those primarily arriving with their own transportation.

to education, rather than a mass tourism project with the aim of financial gain.

Mr. Yonehara's assertion seemed to be in line with my observations during my research period. In one case I was invited to join a local dedication ceremony at the Judge of Hell Hall which was kept private and of course not advertised to tourists at the museum. My presence, or that of Mr. Yonehara or other researchers at the ceremony was met with a cordial openness as we fit ourselves into their ceremonial context without disturbing the event. In a different case which was advertised nationally, the Cloth Covered Bridge was used for a single re-enactment of the Women's Salvation Ceremony, after 130 years of not being practiced. This re-enactment took place as part of national spotlight on unique heritage in the prefectures. The ceremony was greeted with great interest from both within and outside of the community, as it was broadcasted nationally. Though there was interest outside of Tateyama by a new religious group to use the bridge for their own salvation ceremony which they hoped to initiate, the museum recognized how problematic this could have been and declined permission to this outside group to use the facility. While this type of ceremony could very likely be economically exploited as a tourism draw by the local community, there was apparently no cultural or religious interest in continuing this ceremony and therefore it has not been repeated. My impression of the museum management is that they are keenly aware of such problems which could arise from a negotiation or control over the site and must tread carefully with the local community as a whole. Given their status as outside academic professionals, they enjoy a power to authorize specific interpretations of the religion. Yet as "outsiders," they can potentially maintain more diverse communication channels than if they were a local elite managing the site.

It is unclear if the infusion of such large funds through the museum project into the village were a welcome investment by the local community, even when we consider that the neighboring mass tourism of the Kurobe-Alpine Route to the mountain top and the winter ski industry had virtually bypassed the village of Tateyama. During my several visits to the museum, from 1994 to 1999, I saw virtually no change in the local enterprise, except for a small restaurant located near the walking route through the museum exhibits just being built during the summer of 1999. From my interviews with local people, (both engaged in employment or volunteer work for the museum, or those with no connection to the museum) they consistently

expressed deep pride in the heritage of Tateyama and in some cases have developed a new found interest in their local history. Some have published informal web sites featuring their history. Other local historians and documenters of the heritage of Tateyama are consulted by the museum researchers.

Conclusion

While the generous financial support from Toyama prefecture for the Tateyama Museum may be far beyond the budget of most developing regions that hope to maintain or preserve cultural identity, there are some compelling directions and critical issues which the Tateyama Museum raises. First, from this particular case we can clearly see that pre-modern traditions and a search for cultural identity are not necessarily irrelevant to the conditions of modern Japan. Although the mountain religion does not exert the same social power or control over its visitors that it once did, what is communicated at the museum would appear to serve as an important reminder that traditional values, hopes and beliefs are still salient and being negotiated to fit new contexts and audiences. As practices associated with the religion have nearly all but disappeared, the museum complex acts as a memorial to tradition and reminder of national identity, mending the gap between tradition and modernity.

The commodification of culture is perhaps one of the most worrisome trends of the late modern period, yet this feature, at present is fortunately neither a goal nor priority of the Tateyama museum or the prefecture which supports it financially. Though enormous financial investments were required to realize this project, it is cultural capital, rather than direct economic benefits that motivates the producers to contribute to the museum complex. It is important to point out that this interest emanates from outsiders who may have already lost touch with the "real" or "traditional" Japan which they hope to preserve or re-imagine, rather than from the local community itself. Though an ambivalence towards affluence and aspects of modernity in Japan is expertly articulated and criticised through the museum exhibits, it is important to also not forget that it is precisely affluence and modernity that has afforded and inspired such a project to be conceptualized as it has.

Uncovering the extent to local resistance or a response to the elite production of local culture was unfortunately beyond the scope of this particular research period in Tateyama,

however this would be an important facet to more fully explore in future research at the site. It would appear that at least for the time being, local people have benefited from the museum project primarily through the transformation of their small, makeshift village museum housing a treasure trove of historically valuable items, into a well funded research center with well educated researchers. The existence of the museum and the innovative exhibits has by all accounts reawakened pride in their village as a reminder of that heritage. The impact of the reproduction of tradition and all its modern manifestations however may prove to tell another story especially in the coming years. Based on similar studies which focus on the impact of the local community, we would only expect that there will be some effects.

What perhaps is most striking in and around the museum complex and the frame of Tateyama village itself is the coexistence of diverse practice, material culture, interpretations, and levels of authenticity and fictions within deliberately contextualized space. Rather than viewing the use of technology and modern materials as entirely incompatible with the nature-oriented message of the religion, in fact the museum complex seems to represent a re-mandalization of "traditional" ideologies onto modern space and sentiments. The separation of the distinct modern interpretations of the religion into different spatial fields helps manage more than one interpretation of religious practice, significance and "authenticity." This fortunately includes reserved space for local people who continue practices at sites which have still at the time of this writing, not been contrived or deliberately manipulated to fit into tourism aims, commercialism, or an anachronistic conforming to past practice. Management and planning of this particular site reflect a strategic protection so that meanings and significance are not drained out of the exhibits, made anachronistic, nor that they become merely an object of commodification for financial profits. These points offer a compelling management model for museum planners who are committed to maintaining historical accuracy and critical research on the one hand, yet also hope to utilize new communication mediums to translate the past as significant for a modern audience. At the same time, the unresolved issues of locality must also be considered seriously for the unintended effects that a museum may have.

The unwillingness to compromise tradition with modernity is perhaps the ultimate death sentence for traditions that are hanging by a thread in our intensively globalized world. While

the ideological uses of tradition and the distortions of national identity will no doubt continue to haunt heritage sites like Tateyama Museum, what this site provides us is a very fascinating example of how syncretic processes and appropriation works in Japan. These elements are fundamental to an understanding of how Japan has more generally integrated tradition alongside the modern without contradiction.   Though what is "authentic" will continue to be debated and argued,   what is certain is that culture and traditions are neither static nor should they be conceived as unified or "pure" entities.   Acknowledgment of these facts does not make historical interpretation and museum work any easier. However, considering sophisticated models which may heal discontinuities surely should be a part of the agenda for those working in cultural preservation.

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