

# The Celebration of *Haru-Yama* (Spring Mountain) : An Example of Folk Religious Practices in Contemporary Japan

By  
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## Introduction

Folk religion in Japan, though somewhat attenuated due to such modern developments as industrialization and urbanization, continues to be a major force in the life of rural people. Of the many aspects of Japanese folk religion, one of the historically important aspects has been the association of religious beliefs and activities with sacred mountains. Nor has the existence of sacred mountains and the performance of religious activities on mountains escaped Western notice. Jesuit missionaries of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries wrote back to Rome disparaging accounts of their Japanese rivals who carried out secret practices in the mountains.<sup>1</sup> Kaempfer's early published account of Japan devoted a short section to the "mountain priests," called "Jammabos,"<sup>2</sup> (or *yamabushi* in modern Japanese). In more re-

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1. Georg Schurhammer, "Die Yamabushis; nach gedruckten und ungedruckten Berichten des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts," *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft*, XII (1922), 206-28; reprinted, *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Natur- und Völkerkunde Ostasiens*, XLVI (1965), 47-83. See also Ebizawa Arimichi, "Yasokaishi to Shugendô to no Kôshô" ("The Relations Between the Jesuits and Shugendô"), in his collection of essays, *Kirishitan no Kenkyû* (Tokyo: Unebi Shobô, 1942), pp. 85-127.

2. Engelbert Kaempfer, *The History of Japan. Together with a Description of the Kingdom of Siam 1690-92*, trans. J. G. Scheuzer (3 vols.; Glasgow: James Maclehose, 1906), II, 43-56. It was originally published at London, 1727 in two volumes.

cent times such as Westerners as the mountain-climber Weston and the student of religion Lowell have published accounts of pilgrimage and trance within Japanese sacred mountains.<sup>3</sup> Although these earlier accounts are of lasting interest, the contemporary investigation of Japanese folk religion must proceed along different lines. In particular, close observation of the religious practices and utilization of Japanese publications are prerequisites. It is also essential that any folk practices be seen in the total context of Japanese religion.<sup>4</sup> The present article is an attempt to document through direct observation and reference to Japanese publications one aspect of folk religion connected with Japanese mountains.

### The Religious Background of the *Haru-Yama* Celebrated at Gas-san

In order to understand the celebration of *Haru-yama* (spring mountain) at one sacred mountain, we must first recognize: some general features of Japanese religion, some characteristics of Japanese "mountain religion" (*sangaku shinkô*), some specific features of the movement of *Shugendô* (the "religion" of austerities in the mountains), and the situation of folk religion in one district of Japan. In general, Japanese religion has a long history with a number of separate traditions blended into one religious heritage. This means that folk religion in Japan is *not* the religion outside the organized religions such as Shinto and Buddhism; on the contrary, it is the popular religion which has incorporated elements of all the major tradition.<sup>5</sup> Within Japanese religion are a number of "sub-systems" which cut across the

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3. Walter Weston, *Mountaineering and Exploration in the Japanese Alps* (London: John Murray, 1896); Percival Lowell, *Occult Japan, or the Way of the Gods; an Esoteric Study of Japanese Personality* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1895; first published in *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, XXI, XXII).

4. See the remarks of C. Ouwehand, *Namazu-e and Their Themes. An Interpretative Approach to Some Aspects of Japanese Folk Religion* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1964), esp. page x. See also my article, "Toward a United Interpretation of Japanese Religion," in *The History of Religions; Essays on the Problem of Understanding*, ed. Joseph M. Kitagawa (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1967), pp. 195-225.

5. For a general introduction to Japanese religion see my forthcoming *Unity and Diversity in Japanese Religious History* (Belmont, California: Dickenson Publishing Co., 1968).

lines of organized religions. One of these sub-systems is the array of religious phenomena associated with sacred mountains. This includes not only the many sacred mountains, but also the "divinities" (*kami*) which descend or dwell there. This sub-system also includes rituals performed on mountains, pilgrimages to mountains, belief in mountains as the otherworld, and the mountain as a site of funeral memorials. When listed as separate items, these religious phenomena sound like so many unrelated "superstitions." However, when they appear in any concrete situation, they present an interrelated complex in which the believer lives out a coherent religious worldview. Japanese scholars have seen the implicit unity of these phenomena, calling them *sangaku shinkô* ("mountain creed," in the wide sense of all religious phenomena associated with mountains).<sup>6</sup> The diverse phenomena of *sangaku shinkô* reach back into prehistory and color much of recent folk religion, too. One of the main vehicles for channelling most of these mountain practices into a continuous tradition was the movement called *Shugendô*. The word *Shugendô* means literally the "way" of mastering austerities, but it was understood that these austerities were practiced in the mountains. Historically, *Shugendô* arose out of the prehistoric tradition of sacred mountains, and mixed the Shinto reverence for Japanese soil with the Chinese Taoistic penchant for mountain wizards and the Buddhist practice of magico-religious austerities. The result was the legend of En no Gyôja, a Japanese mountain wizard who set the precedent of practicing (Buddhist) austerities in Japanese sacred mountains. Although he is supposed to have lived about the eighth century, the major organizing impetus for *Shugendô* came out of the ninth century Buddhist sects of Tendai and Shingon. The full-blown organizations of *Shugendô* sects dates probably from about the thirteenth century. By the fifteenth century there were several major ecclesiastical divisions of *Shugendô* with numerous local branches on the equally numerous sacred mountains of all areas of Japan.

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6. Three recent English articles by Japanese scholars are: Ikegami Hiromasa, "The Significance of Mountains in the Popular Beliefs in Japan," in *Religious Studies in Japan* (Tokyo: Maruzen, 1959), pp. 152-60; Kishimoto Hideo, "The Role of Mountains in the Religious Life of the Japanese People," *Proceedings of the Ninth International Congress for the History of Religions, 1958* (Tokyo: Maruzen, 1960), pp. 545-49; Hori Ichirô, "Mountains and Their Importance for the Idea of the Other World in Japanese Folk Religion," *History of Religions*, VI (1966), 1-23.

The central headquarters of the Tendai and Shingon lines of *Shugendô* were near Kyoto, while there was another important sect on the island of Kyûshû and a rather independent sect in the Tôhoku region.

The *Shugendô* sect of the Tôhoku region in Tokugawa times centered around a triad of sacred mountains, Dewa Sanzan ("the three sacred mountains of Dewa"). Dewa was an ancient name for one of the northernmost sections of Honshû island. Of the three mountains—Haguro-san, Gas-san, and Yudono-san—eventually Haguro-san was the most influential and thus gave the sect its name of *Haguro Shugendô*. This sect is a complex subject in its own right, since it forms a unique organization of rites, symbolism, doctrine, priestly hierarchy, and a "parish" network with Haguro-san as its sacred headquarters.<sup>7</sup> However, the "three sacred mountains of Dewa" were neither monolithic in ecclesiastical organization nor uniform in religious observances. Indeed, Yudono-san, within the Shingon tradition, developed a unique esoteric practice of self-mummification, and was also a bitter ecclesiastical foe of Haguro-san.<sup>8</sup> Of the three mountains, Gas-san ("Moon-mountain") was the highest in elevation and the most revered. In traditional hanging scrolls depicting the three mountains, Gas-san always was at the top—at the apex of an imaginary triangle with Haguro-san and Yudono-san below to the right and left. In Buddhist symbolism Gas-san was the abode of *Amida* (*Amitabha*), Yudono-san the abode of *Dainichi* (*Vairocana*), and Haguro-san the abode of *Kannon* (*Avalokitesvara*). Probably Gas-san (also pronounced Tsuki-yama) was the site of a Shinto shrine mentioned in the tenth century *Engi-shiki*, and at any rate various Shinto *kami* also became associated with the three mountains. But Gas-san was primarily an object of

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7. This was the main topic of my "A Religious Study of the Mount Haguro Sect of *Shugendô*: An Example of Japanese Mountain Religion" (2 vols.; Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Chicago, 1965), which I am revising for publication. Documentation for many aspects of *Shugendô* and *sangaku shinkô* will be found in my dissertation. At present the only Western monograph on *Shugendô* is Gaston Renondeau, *Le Shugendô. Histoire, doctrine et rites des anachorètes dits Yamabushi (Cahiers de la Société Asiatique, XVIII; Paris. Imprimerie Nationale, 1965)*.

8. Hori Ichirô, "Self-mummified Buddhas in Japan. An Aspect of the Shungen-dô ('Mountain Asceticism') Sect," *History of Religions*, I (1961), 222-42.

popular pilgrimage, rather than a monastic retreat or ecclesiastical center for parish control. Gas-san was so high that it was uninhabitable in winter; in the summer pilgrimage season priests from nearby headquarters took up temporary residence there to guide the pilgrims. Yudono-san and Haguro-san exerted their respective powers over the few pilgrim routes which led through their mountain territory to Gas-san. During Tokugawa times *Haguro Shugendô* was recognized as a rather independent *Shugendô* organization by the feudal government, free to carry out its own traditions so long as it was obedient to the Buddhist temples in charge of it. With the end of the feudal government in the Meiji Restoration of 1867 all this was overturned. In the religious policy of the Meiji Restoration was a general tendency to disestablish Buddhism and establish or "restore" Shinto, thereby purifying Shinto from Buddhist influence. In 1872 was handed down the order of proscription for *Shugendô*, with *Shugendô* headquarters split artificially into large Shinto establishments and relatively smaller Buddhist remnants. *Shugendô* priests, many of whom already had received orthodox Buddhist ordination, were forced either to become pure Buddhist priests or to become pure Shinto priests, or to return to a lay occupation. Nevertheless, in spite of the official manipulation of organized religion, the popular religious sentiments associated with these mountains lived on in the hearts and practices of the people. Some of these practices persevere to the present day, of which the *haru-yama* is one example.<sup>9</sup>

The *haru-yama* described in this article concerns the celebration of the religious relationship between these three sacred mountains, especially Gas-san, and the people of one village called Tôge. The little village (*mura*) of Tôge lies at the foot of Haguro-san and has a long history of intimate relationship to this mountain.<sup>10</sup> During the Tokugawa period Tôge was practical-

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9. After World War II some of the Buddhist-oriented remnants from the 1872 official dissolution of *Shugendô* were able to organize once again as *Shugendô* sects. However, as will become obvious in the description of the *haru-yama*, its present form is not a part of the contemporary *Shugendô* organization.

10. The name itself indicates a religious history: "in Japan the word for mountain pass is *tôge*, originating from the word *tamuke*, 'to offer,' because travelers always had to offer something to the god of the pass as a prayer for safe journey," Hori, "Mountains and Their Importance," p. 6.

ly a *Shugendô* town, since it held over three hundred of the combination temple and lodging house (*shukubô*) for pilgrims on their way to Haguro-san and the two other sacred mountains. The priests and semi-priestly figures of this village were closely tied to the ritual and festival activities of Haguro-san, which maintained more monastic and ascetic traditions. Even after the Meiji Restoration the people of Tôge continued the close relationship with the main shrine of Haguro-san, which was renamed Dewa-jinja (Dewa-shrine). Formerly this had been the most important building on Haguro-san, and the dominance of Shinto in Meiji times dictated that "Dewa-shrine" be the most important shrine in the three mountains. Although the history of *Shugendô*, Shinto, and Buddhism in the three mountains is one of sudden ups and downs, the people of Tôge have kept alive their warm and natural appreciation for these three sacred mountains. Tôge is still a relatively small village with several hundred families. It is primarily a farming village large enough to have its little shops, own post office, and school system up through grade school. Wet rice and upland agriculture was traditionally the most important economic activity. In more recent times there has been some logging around the mountains but still there is no significant industry. The major nearby city is Tsuruoka, which features high schools and railway connections. There is regular bus service from Tôge to Tsuruoka. All the geographical references within this article fall within the present prefecture of Yamagata, which faces the Japan sea from the northern part of Honshû Island. While Tôge has experienced the general shift of young men from farms to the industrialized cities, its own traditions and customs have not been so severely undermined as the more urbanized and industrialized areas. Tôge is true to its rural setting by being relatively more traditional and conservative than urban Japan. It is worth mentioning that both Christianity and the highly successful "new religions" are inconspicuous at Tôge. In the past few decades the area surrounding the three mountains, especially Haguro-san, has become a rather important tourist site due to its historic significance and natural beauty. The people of Tôge, like many Japanese, are proud of their local history and customs whether or not it involves an explicit religious faith. To some extent there is commercial exploitation of this colorful local history, (though deplored by the revived *Shugendô* group), but it does not enter into the celebration of *haru-yama*.

## Description of the Celebration of Haru-yama in 1964

In studying the history and surviving practices of *Haguro Shugendô* I became aware of the great importance of folk religious practices for understanding *Shugendô* and the contemporary tradition of the three sacred mountains of Dewa. Living in the city of Sendai, not too far from these three mountains, I took advantage of opportunities to observe both the activities of the revived sect of *Haguro Shugendô* and other folk religious practices in this area. This explains how I happened to participate in the *haru-yama* of 1964. And, although the *haru-yama* is an important illustration of how *Shugendô* had penetrated folk religion, the contemporary practice of *haru-yama* deserves to be described and interpreted in its own right as an interesting example of Japanese folk religion.<sup>11</sup>

The *haru-yama* is a spring festival performed by representatives of Tôge at the foot of Haguro-san. The actual festival consists of two representatives (or proxies) from each of the eight *buraku* or subdivisions of Tôge who make a round of the three mountains of Dewa Sanzan and bring back to their respective *buraku* some mountain plants.<sup>12</sup> As noted above, it is obvious that this is a village festival, and not actually a festival of *Haguro Shugendô*, even though it is historically related to the *yamabushi* of Tôge. (*Yamabushi*, those who "lie down in the mountains," is the traditional name for the priestly and semi-priestly leaders of *Shugendô*.) Scattered secondary references to the *haru-yama* will be made, but the following account is based mainly on the writer's observation.

The *haru-yama* of Tôge was performed on May third, fourth,

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11. The first description of the *haru-yama* was included in my dissertation, II, 475-88. However, because this example of folk religion is not crucial to the interpretation of *Haguro Shugendô*, it has been omitted from the revised version of the dissertation for publication.

12. For a brief listing see Togawa Anshô, "Shugendô Haguro-ha Goi Ryakkai" ("A Concise Vocabulary of the Haguro Sect of *Shugendô*"), *Kokugakuin Zasshi*, XLVI, No. 11 (November, 1940), 143-69, the listing "haru-yama," p. 163.

and fifth, in 1964.<sup>13</sup> Early on the morning of May 3 the two people from each of the eight *buraku* who are proxies for that year's festival climb from Tôge via the stone staircase several miles to the Dewa-jinja at the summit of Haguro-san. While climbing to the mountaintop shrine, respect is paid at the various smaller shrines along the way by a nod of the head and clap of hands.<sup>14</sup> Wearing the Shinto style of "*kesa*" (surplice)<sup>15</sup> they enter the main shrine and are led in a simple prayer by a *kannushi* (Shinto priest), after which they all drink a small cup of sake. Then they meet in a separate room and discuss the practical plans for carrying out the *haru-yama*. Since this is a village function, it is planned and carried out completely by the villagers and their *buraku* proxies. On this morning the villagers make some arrangements for lodging at the shrine's building called Saikan ("purification hall") the night of May 4, and decide to hire a truck to take everyone as far as the "sixth station" or *roku-gôme* of Gas-san.<sup>16</sup> (In earlier times it was the custom to walk to Gas-san, but with the coming of modern transportation all forms of pilgrimage have changed drastically.) After all the

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13. See Wakamori Tarô, "Haru Yama-iri" ("Spring Mountain Entry"), *Minkan Denshō*, X, No. 4 (March, 1944), 23-32. The date is actually determined by the *hachijûhachi-ya*, the "eighty-eighth night" (or day) after the beginning of spring according to the lunar calendar. See also Nishitsunoi Masayoshi, ed., *Nenjû Gyôji Jiten* ("A Dictionary of Annual Festivals") (Tokyo: Tôkyôdô, 1958), the listing "hachijû-hachi-ya," p. 631. Many proverbs celebrate this day as marking the end of the season of frost. After this day it is widely considered to be safe for planting, and thus various rites praying for the safety of plants are performed about this time.

14. During the ritual called the "fall peak" in late August and early September the procession of *Haguro Shugendô* also reverences various shrines and holy spots along this path. In former times *Haguro Shugendô* observed a full ritual year of four "peaks" named after the four seasons. See my "Four Ritual Periods of Haguro Shugendô in Northeastern Japan," *History of Religions*, V (1965), 93-113.

15. *Kesa* is the formal term for the orthodox Buddhist surplice. The *kesa* apparently passed over into Shinto usage, and in the present case is worn even by laymen in the sense of special dedication or purification.

16. Many Japanese mountains, including sacred Fuji, came to be divided into ten "stations" or *gô*. Probably this symbolism came from the Buddhist scheme of ten stages between hell and heaven; climbing a sacred mountain was analogous to passing from hell to heaven, from profane to sacred.



plans have been made, cups of *sake* are passed around for a toast before breaking up the meeting. Then everyone descends the stone staircase to Tôge. (See Photo 1.) Although originally plants were picked during the climb of Gas-san, after the war a large tract of land including the three mountains was made into a national park. The rules of the national park prohibit the removal of any plants or animals, thus making it impossible to bring back these plants from Gas-san. Therefore the *buraku* proxies leave the stone pathway and pick leaves of *tsubaki* for members of their *buraku*. *Tsubaki*, they say, is the same as Shinto's sacred plant, the *sakaki*. Then they return to their homes and await the truck ride to Gas-san early the next morning. (See Photo 2.) This has taken only several hours, and it is only 9:30 A.M. when they reach Tôge.

A clue to the whole ceremony of *haru-yama* is found in the name which all the proxies share. They are called *gyônin*, a word similar to *gyôja* or ascetic, which means that they are carrying out a special religious duty.<sup>17</sup> Formerly there were more severe restrictions, but even today they should observe religious abstinence, or *shôjin*. This means at least abstaining from meat and not cohabiting with one's wife.<sup>18</sup> The white clothes traditionally worn by the *gyônin*, as well as the small white "*kesa*" indicate the "purity" of his religious task.

On the morning of May 4 everyone gathers at 4:30 for the truck ride to Gas-san. Men other than the proxies may participate voluntarily. A number of voluntary participants, an official ranger of the national forest (at the same time a member of the seventh *buraku*), and the writer increased the number of sixteen proxies to just over thirty persons. Crowded into two small trucks, all headed for Gas-san, passing the road leading to the summit of Haguro-san, but not stopping at Dewa-jinja. The first

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17. This is a popular usage, in contrast to the formal traditions of ascetics at Yudono-san and Haguro-san also called *gyônin*. See the reference to "haru yama no gyônin" in Togawa, "Uzen Tôge-mura no Monoimi" ("Religious Abstinence in Tôgemura, Yamagata Prefecture"), in *Matsuri*, No. 3, pp. 45-49, esp. p. 46.

18. The former procedures of restrictions or abstinence were called *hi-agari*. See the explanation of this in Togawa, "Shugendô Haguro-ha Goi Ryakkai," the listing "hi-agari," p. 163. For one thing, they used a "separate fire" or *bekka* in a room of their home temporarily set aside for this purpose. In former times the *bekka* was used by the ascetic monks who never left Haguro-san.

stop is made about five o'clock at a small wayside shrine. This spot is called Daiman, technically the second "station" of Gas-san, or *ni-gôme*. (Even as late as Meiji times, Daiman was one of the three spots for checking the pilgrims' stamp of permission to enter the mountains via Haguro-san.) Everyone gets out of the truck and gathers around the shrine to recite a simple prayer of purification. (See Photo 3.) Then they get back into the trucks, which begin the rather steep ascent of Gas-san. Already the remains of snowdrifts are visible in the valleys.

At 5:30 A.M. the trucks reach the end of the road, at the sixth "station" or *roku-gôme*. At this point the trucks are left for the climb on foot, amidst increasingly deeper drifts of snow. (See Photo 4.) About 6:15 the seventh station or *nana-gôme* is reached after climbing up through brush and snow. The sixth station seems to be past the tree line, and by the seventh station there are no trees at all. The seventh station is marked simply by piles of brush, with no sign of a shrine. After a well-deserved rest they proceed.

At about 6:45 they reach the eighth station or *hachi-gôme*. In passing from the seventh to the eighth station a number of interesting sights appear. The area called Sai no Kawara is traversed, featuring some statues of Jizô and memorial stones. (See Photo 5) The Sai no Kawara is an important feature of the "otherworld" at various sacred mountains, and Jizô is well-known as the savior of the dead.<sup>19</sup> From this point on there are memorial stones and many examples of rock-piles built up by passing pilgrims. But the *gyônin* pass this area without stopping until they reach *hachi-gôme*, also known as Midagahara, the plain of *Mida* or *Amida*. The prayer of purification is repeated at a small wooden shrine here, which is protected from wind and snow by eight foot stone walls. Then breakfast is eaten, topped off with tea from a skiers' hut. Even from the seventh station the scenery is quite beautiful, with a view of Chôkai-san to the north, Tôhoku's highest mountain. Other mountains, such as the famous skiing mountain Zao-san to the west, come into view near the summit of Gas-san. From below the eighth station skiers are seen. Gas-san is one of the mountains famous for late skiing, but of course skiing is a modern innovation which disregards the historically earlier, religious "mountain-opening"

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19. For a general interpretation see Matthias Eder, "Totenseelen und Ahnengeister in Japan," *Anthropos*, LI (1956), 97-112.

or *yama-biraki*. To the Westerner, the view of parka-clad skier and white-clad *gyōnin* together certainly presents an interesting contrast. There appears to be a contrast of West and East, new and old, secular and religious. But as the two groups drink tea together, it is difficult to draw any sharp line dividing them.

From this station the climbing becomes more difficult, and since the distance between the eighth and ninth stations is extraordinarily great, a rest is called in the snow about 7:45 A.M. At 8:10 the ninth station or *kyū-gōme* is reached. Here there is a shrine called Manai-jinja next to a pond called Busshō-ike, literally the pond where Buddhas live.<sup>20</sup> The reference to Buddhas may mean *hotoke*, dead people who have become Buddhas, and surrounding the pond are various memorial stones. It is said that the people bring cremation ashes here. Midway between the ninth station and the summit another rest is taken at 8:30, and at 9:00 the summit of Gas-san is reached. (See Photo 6.)

At the very summit is a small shrine entirely surrounded by an eight foot wall of stone. Even though it is early May, heavy ice is on the nearby bushes. The *gyōnin* and others gather inside the stone enclosure before the very small shrine, Gas-san-jinja. As the prayer of purification is repeated, several bottles of *sake* brought along are offered and candles are lit. (See Photo 7.) Later the writer was told that one feature of this ceremony was to divine the next year's crop or fortune by whether or not the candles stayed lit or went out.

In years of inclement weather this is the point of return for the *haru-yama*. However, in 1964, the weather was remarkably clear, so the sixteen proxies or *gyōnin*, several voluntary participants, and the writer made the round trip between Gas-san-jinja and Yudono-san-jinja before descending Gas-san via the route of ascent. Because there is little time, all set out at once. A very rapid descent is made down the steep slopes of snow, part of the time by turning up one's toes and "skiing" on one's heels. One steep cliff is traversed by means of a steel ladder. (See Photo 8.) By 10:30 the *shintai*, or object of worship of Yudono-san-jinja is reached. This is the site where photographs are not permitted, but a rough sketch can be found in one guide

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20. *Busshō* can mean the birth of Buddha, but as this is a site of memorial stones, it probably means *hotoke* (dead people) who are reborn as Buddhas.

book.<sup>21</sup> As others have remarked, the natural formation of out-cropping rock resembles the torso of a nude woman.<sup>22</sup> It is stained red by the hot springs which gush forth even in winter. Again the participants gather before the stone to recite the simple prayer of purification. While resting and eating, various people drink the distasteful water, supposedly for a healing cure. Others dip the tip of their white "*kesa*" in the water, or soak their feet by standing in the running hot water. (Since they are wearing *waraji* or straw sandals, the water passes right through.) Several bottles are filled to take home. Some of the men pay respects to their ancestors' spirits in a spot next to the *shintai*, which is still hidden in the snow.

The ascent from Yudono-san-jinja is quite arduous and slow. The height of Gas-san is quoted at 1,980 meters (about 6,494 feet), and 1,504 meters (about 4,933 feet) for Yudono-san. Since the shrine at Yudono-san is below the summit, this means a rather sharp ascent of more than 1,500 feet up slippery snow. The writer, unaccustomed to such exercise, was barely able to make it back to Gas-san after many rests. Finally the summit of Gas-san is reached about 1:30 P.M., where everyone is congratulated with *sake*. Before 2:00 P.M. the quick descent of Gas-san starts. Only one rest is taken, about 3:00 at the eighth station or *hachi-gôme*, and no religious activity is seen during the descent.

The trucks, boarded at the sixth station or *roku-gôme* about 4:00, go directly to Dewa-jinja, arriving about 5:00 P.M. Everyone goes immediately to the Saikan ("purification hall") in their white clothes. Individually the participants pay their respects at the altar inside the Saikan. (This is the same altar where the ascetics called *matsu hijiri*, "pine saints," worship during the ritual period called winter peak.) Until 1962 it was the custom to spend this final night of the *haru-yama* in the rough shelter called *shitsuraeya*, but in 1962 it was moved to the Sai-

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21. Karikusa Saburô, *Dewa Sanzan* ("The Three Sacred Mountains of Dewa") (Tokyo: Yama to Keikoku-sha, 1963), *Alpine Guide*, No. 34, p. 79. This book is a popular guide book for mountain climbing and sightseeing, but interesting in that it includes many photographs of temples, shrines, festivals, *yamabushi*, and pilgrims.

22. Hori, "Self-mummified Buddhas in Japan," pp. 227, 233-34, also "Mountains and Their Importance," pp. 18-20, where he discusses "Example of a Mountain as Divine Mother: Mount Gas-san."

kan.<sup>23</sup> As the name *gyōnin* indicates, these people supposedly perform *gyō* or asceticism in their tour around the mountain. This is why they must observe "abstinence." The *shitsuraeya* is a special building set apart from other shrine structures, used only at this time and during the winter peak. Thus, moving from the *shitsuraeya* to the Saikan marks another weakening or relaxing of "*gyō*." The Saikan (in pre-Meiji times a temple known as Kezō-in) is a fine, spacious shrine structure with kitchen and sleeping facilities for the shrine's "pilgrims" and general visitors. After a hot bath, a meal of celebration (with no meat or fish) is brought from the respective homes in the village. Much *sake* is exchanged, a common village banquet the next night is discussed but not agreed on, and after more drinking and singing, everyone retires after 9:00 P.M. In previous times there was no bath, and they went to sleep with their clothes on in the *shitsuraeya*. Apparently to retain the idea of *gyō*, they are limited to two blankets for two people, sleeping on the *tatami* or straw mats found in all Japanese homes.

May fifth, the final day of the *haru-yama*, begins early. By 4:00 A.M. everyone is rising, exchanging cups of *sake*, and finishing the remainder of the previous night's meal. About 5:30 A.M. the children of these men come from the village via the stone staircase to pick up the lunch boxes and excess baggage. Then at 6:30 everyone walks to the Tenyū-sha near the *shitsuraeya*. The Tenyū-sha is the small shrine which honors Tenyū, the most illustrious *bettō* (leader) in the mountain's history, even though the present shrine was founded during the Meiji period. After repeating the prayer of purification, they move on to Dewa-jinja (see Photo 9) to listen to the *kannushi* (Shintō priests) recite a shrine prayer. Then the priests swing a *nusa* (a pole with paper tassels) over the heads of the participants, and pour *sake* for everyone. They then revere the shrine of the founder,

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23. The *shitsuraeya* is an unfloored building near Dewa-jinja which is prominent in the celebration of the "winter peak." In the memory of the present participants the contrast is between the present custom of lodging at the Saikan, and the "former" custom of lodging at the *shitsuraeya*. However, according to the historical research of Togawa, the pre-Meiji custom was to climb Gas-san, revere Yudono-san, and go back to Daiman to confine themselves for the night there at the temple Kokūzō-dō. On the next morning they proceeded to Haguro-san and returned to the village. See "Shugendō-Haguro-ha Goi Ryakkai," the listing "haru-yama," p. 163.

Hachiko-jinja, named after Prince Hachiko. Next the stone staircase is taken to the village, where they are greeted and congratulated by villagers. (See Photo 10.) The last group recital of the prayer of purification is at the present shrine office just above the entrance to the stone staircase. Leaving the shrine office, the proxies or *gyōnin* gradually go their own ways, paying their respects at their own *buraku*'s shrine. This is the shrine of the *ubusuna-gami*, where they were first brought to a shrine as a baby. Then they return to their respective *buraku* where a reception party is waiting.

The writer was able to witness the reception party of the seventh *buraku*, which retains the older traditional form. The "reception party," in Japanese, is *saka-mukae*. *Mukae* clearly means a greeting or welcome, but many half-joking meanings have been attached to "*saka*." It is said to mean the *saka* or three steep sections in the stone staircase leading to Haguro-san; or it is treated as *sake*, since *sake* is a part of every welcome or party.<sup>24</sup> But the real meaning surely goes back to *sakai* or boundary, that is, a welcome at the boundary of the village or *buraku*. Sakurai has analyzed this celebration of *saka-mukae*, which is widely observed to welcome back *kō* (pilgrim association) members from their visit to a distant shrine or temple<sup>25</sup> Sakurai says the most common practice is to go to the village boundary both to see off and also to welcome back the pilgrim proxies (*daisansha*). The former is called *detachi* or *o-miokuri*, but only the rite of return is called *saka-mukae*. Sakurai discusses mainly the *kō* which visit the famous Shinto shrines of Ise, but the *saka-mukae* always features food and drink shared by villagers and pilgrims *outside* the village boundaries. Sakurai says the folk etymology of *sake* ("rice wine") as the first part of *saka-mukae* originated among those who saw the celebration as a waste of money spent on *sake*. He gives a number of examples to show that the returning person was regarded either as sacred or as an actual *kami*. He concludes, "As for the *saka-*

24. *Ibid.*, "saka-mukae," p. 154; Togawa notes that although the proper way of writing *saka* should probably use the character for "slope," even the ancient literature at Haguro employs the character for *sake* or "rice wine."

25. Sakurai Tokutarō, "Saka-mukae—Daisansha Shōgei no Shūzoku ni tsuite" ("Saka-mukae—Concerning the Custom of Seeing Off and Welcoming Back Pilgrim Proxies"), in his book, *Minkan Shinkō Ron* (Tokyo: Yūzankaku, 1958), pp. 249-57.

*mukae*, originally it was a religious rite in which they saw off and welcomed back the person who left the village and traveled to the world of the *kami*."<sup>26</sup> In general the *saka-mukae* represents a meeting between the sacred world which the *gyônin* has visited (or the sacred state he represents), and the profane world of the village. The *saka-mukae* at Tôge has some peculiar features, and illustrates more concretely the contemporary situation of *sangaku shinkô* surrounding Dewa Sanzan and Haguro-san.

Formerly, each of the eight *buraku* of Tôge held the *saka-mukae* on separate small hills or knolls outside the village. This hill or knoll was known as the *o-yama* (mountain) of that *buraku*, or *saka-mukae-yama*.<sup>27</sup> At present only the seventh *buraku* retains the older custom, all other *buraku* gathering inside a house of that *buraku*. When the two *gyônin* of the seventh *buraku* enter the village, they do not stop at any house, but go on to their *o-yama* about ten minutes' walk from the village. The knoll is not even fifty feet higher than the surrounding fields; it is covered with low brush and one taller tree at the top. Perhaps twenty men are waiting on top of the knoll, sitting on reed mats before a celebration meal. It is now past 8:30 A.M. The *fuda* or paper charms acquired from Dewa-jinja are placed beside a rock under the tree, and after a short greeting, all face the snowy form of Gas-san on the horizon and chant the familiar prayer. (See Photo 11.) This is followed by the final feast of the *haru-yama*, when the *fuda* (in place of mountain plants) are distributed to the *buraku* members. The "red rice" which is served on special occasions such as weddings and funerals is served, along with a special skewer of vegetables.<sup>28</sup> (See Photo 12.) The *gyônin* excuse themselves after eating a little, and return to the village. That night there are additional feasts, but the *haru-yama* is at an end.

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26. *Ibid.*, p. 257. See also "Sakamukae: Welcome for a Returned Pilgrim," *Japanese Folklore Dictionary*, ed. Yanagita Kunio, trans. Takatsuka Masanori (Lexington, Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1958), p. 257. (This is a translation of *Minzokugaku Jiten*.)

27. Togawa, "Shugendô Haguro-ha Goi Ryakkai," the listing "saka-mukae-yama," p. 154. On each of these separate mountains or knolls is a "Gas-san memorial stone," which is mentioned in the text above.

28. The special skewer is called *gorin no zashi* or *gorin no gushi*, and imitates the *Shingon stupa* of five shapes by inserting a skewer through five different vegetables.

Interpretation of the *Haru-yama*

The foregoing is a brief sketch of the actual *haru-yama* as carried out in 1964. It is obvious that this festival has to do with spring or the growing season, especially since it is performed on the *hachijûhachi-ya*, the eighty-eighth day of spring. Some follow Yanagita's interpretation of the *yama no kami* and *ta no kami* alternation, saying the plants traditionally brought back from Gas-san represented the means by which the *yama no kami* descended the mountain.<sup>29</sup> Togawa is of this opinion, saying that the folk rite of greeting the *yama no kami* in the fields became a *Shugendô* rite when it was performed by the Haguro *yamabushi*.<sup>30</sup> At any rate, even today it is a festival of Tôge which concentrates the faith of all villagers in the three mountains, especially Gas-san. The *haru-yama* focuses on Gas-san not only conceptually, but also by the physical act of climbing Gas-san.

Now we may review the high points of this celebration. The religious focus is on the abstinence and climbing to the top of Gas-san. As suggested earlier, climbing the ten "stations" of a mountain seems to lead to a point of religious culmination at the top. In the performance of the *haru-yama* of 1964, the visit to Yudono-san-jinja was something of a side trip. Actually, once one has attained Gas-san's summit, the descent is quick and uninterrupted with no religious acts of any kind. The second high point is the night spent at the Saikan, formerly at the *shitsuraeya*. Sakurai has mentioned that usually pilgrims do not re-

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29. For example, see Yanagita Kunio, comp., *Minzokugaku Jiten* ("Dictionary of Japanese Folklore") (Tokyo: Tôkyôdô, 1951), "ta no kami," pp. 357-60; "yama no kami," pp. 642-44. See also the comprehensive study of Nelly Naumann, "Yama no Kami—die japanische Berggottheit," *Folklore Studies*, XXII (1963), 133-366; XXIII (1964), 48-199.

30. Togawa, "Shugendô to Minzoku" ("*Shugendô* and Folklore"), in *Nihon Minzokugaku Taikei*, VIII, 357. *Haru-yama* is also called *haru-yama no gyô* or *haru-gyô*. The idea of *yama no kami*, expanded by Yanagita to interpret many spring rites, has been faithfully followed by many of his disciples in describing spring rites. In fact, the idea has been used so widely that it has tended to become rather vague and ambiguous. See also Togawa's book, *Haguro Yamabushi to Minkan Shinkô* ("The *Yamabushi* at Haguro and Folk Religion") (Tsuruoka: Fumiya Shoten, 1950), p. 149, and a small article, "Yama no Kami to Ta no Kami" ("The Mountain *Kami* and the Rice Field *Kami*"), *Shônai Minzoku*, No. 22, pp. 7-8.



turn directly to their village homes, but spend one or more nights at a shrine or special confinement building. Togawa says formerly at Haguro they spent as many as ten days of abstinence both preceding and following the *haru-yama*.<sup>31</sup> The third high point is the *saka-mukae*, where the sacred pilgrims transfer their accumulated religious merit to the villagers in the form of the *fuda*. The exact nature of this religious merit is difficult to define, but it forms a direct connection between the mountain and the individual families, for—be it *fuda* or the earlier plants which are brought back—the families place them on the family altar.<sup>32</sup>

The *haru-yama* is no exception to the general tendency for contemporary Japanese folk practices to become abbreviated in form and weaker in religious content. On the other hand, the *haru-yama* continues as a religious practice which links the people of Tôge and these mountains, especially Gas-san. The elements of *gyô* or asceticism are weak, but there remains the clear idea of carrying out a religious practice. Modern Japan boasts one of the largest and most active group of mountain-climbers and skiers in the world, but the *haru-yama* is clearly distinguished from such recent sports. The date, route, and activity of the *haru-yama* are still defined by religious traditions rather than the arbitrary motive of recreation. The seasoned mountain-climber may look down upon the course of the *haru-yama* as not involving any real skills or scaling unconquered peaks. On the other hand, the *haru-yama* demands not only considerable time, but also a great deal of energy and perseverance. This effort is expanded to express and celebrate the religious relationship of the people to their land. It is a warm and natural bond of the people to the landscape in which they live and to the land which they till. The sacred mountain of Gas-san, which

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31. Togawa, *Haguro Yamabushi to Minkan Shinkô*, p. 149. Okada Shigekio has given a brief analysis of the abstinence or "taboo" in the confinement of the *haru-yama*, but this procedure is quite similar to the abstinence practiced by the *matsu hijiri* during the hundred days of the confinement of the winter peak (*fuyu no mine*). See Okada Shigekio, "Haguro-san Gyôji ni okeru 'Tabû' no Kôsetsu" (English title provided as "Survey of taboo in the religious observances at the Mount Haguro"), in *Shûkyô Kenkyû*, No. 127 (October, 1951), pp. 78-80.

32. Formerly the plants picked at Gas-san were said to be placed in the water inlet of the family rice fields. According to Togawa this demonstrates the spring descent of the *yama no kami*.

oversees their valley and harbors their dead, in this new moment of spring grants them fertility and blessing for the growing season. This is not an unusual worldview for an agricultural people, but in our present age of urbanization and industrialization it is a pleasant reminder that man can conceive of and participate in his cosmos with harmony and devotion. This mutual penetration of agricultural rhythms, on the one hand, and the forms of organized Buddhism and Shinto, on the other hand, defines an essential aspect of Japanese folk religion in particular and Japanese religion in general. The *haru-yama* also affords an interesting case for the connection between folk religion and sacred mountains, but this calls for a larger comparative study of sacred mountains which is outside the scope of the present paper.

*Addenda.*

When the article was already in press pertinent new information came to the knowledge of this author.

To footnote 3, p. 2, should be added: See also Hori Ichirô, *Folk Religion in Japan. Continuity and Change*. Edited by Joseph Kitagawa and Alan L. Miller (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968).

To footnote 7, p. 4, should be added: See also the recent publication by Hartmut O. Rotermund, *Die Yamabushi, Aspekte ihres Glaubens, Lebens und ihrer sozialen Funktion im japanischen Mittelalter*, Hamburg, 1968, Monographien zur Völkerkunde, V.



Village proxies from Tôge descending the stone staircase from Dewa-jinja back to the village, May 3, 1964. Note the Shinto style of "kesa" (surplice) around their necks.



Village proxies back in Tôge, seen arranging for the truck ride to Gas-san the next day. Note the plants or "flowers" picked along the stone staircase, and traditionally placed on the *kamidana* (Shinto house altar).



On the way to Gas-san early May 4, the proxies leave the trucks briefly to pray at the second "station" (*ni-gōme*) called Daiman.



Leaving the trucks at the sixth "station" (*roku-gōme*), the proxies start climbing through the lower snowdrifts toward the peak of Gas-san.



The area called Sai no Kawara, where the dead, especially the souls of dead children, reside. Typical of such areas, which are found throughout Japan, are the heaps of natural stone, the memorial stones, and the inevitable status of *Jizō* (seen at the far right with cloth over and around the head).



Approaching the summit of Gas-san, with the small shrine (*Gas-san-jinja*) barely visible behind the proxies. The ice-covered bushes testify to the cool temperatures that still prevail in early May.



The proxies reciting a prayer and clapping hands (as a gesture of reverence) within the stone enclosure, facing the small Gas-san-jinja on the summit of Gas-san.



Descending a steep cliff by means of a steel ladder, on the way to Yudono-san-jinja. Note the straw sandals, which are traditional footwear for all forms of "pilgrimage" in Japan.



The *haru-yama* participants of 1964 assembled before Dewa-jinja on May 5.



Villagers of Tôge greeting the returning *haru-yama* participants, May 5.



The *saka-mukae* ("boundary-welcoming") of the seventh *buraku* outside Tôge village. The two pilgrim proxies of the seventh *buraku* are at the head of the group (with white head bands). Between the proxies and the pine tree to the right is the "Gas-san sone" with *fuda* (paper blessings) resting on it. All are facing Gas-san, faintly visible on the horizon.



The meal of the *saka-mukae*: to the left are ordinary dishes such as rice wine (*sake*) and bean curd; on the newspaper to the right are the especially festive dishes. The red beans with rice or red rice (*seki-han*) is common to festive occasions such as weddings. The *gorin-zashi* ("five-circle-skewer") is said to be an imitation of the five-leveled stupa found in Shingon Buddhism.