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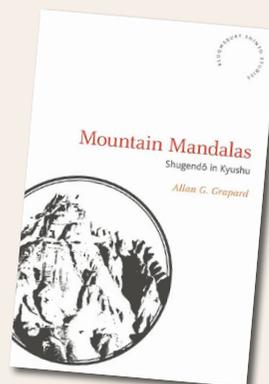
BOOK REVIEW

Mountain Mandalas: Shugendō in Kyushu

By Allan G. Grapard

Bloomsbury Academic, 2016
xvii + 301 pages.

Reviewed by Anna DULINA



In *Mountain Mandalas: Shugendō in Kyushu*, Allan Grapard explores the ways in which sacred space in Japan is created, conceptualized, visualized, and performed. The book is the culmination of a lifetime of research on sacred geography that has been theoretically influential.¹ For example, his earlier articulation of the concept of “mandalization”—the organization of sacred space within a mandala structure—is now a common term in cultural anthropology and religious studies.² The book under review focuses on the mountain-based institutional and ritual system of Shugendō, and three cultic sites in northern Kyushu: Mt. Hiko, Usa, and the Kunisaki Peninsula. Here, I discuss one aspect of Grapard’s book, which has received far less critical attention, namely the worship of the tutelary deity Hachiman.

In the first chapter (“Shugendō and the Production of Social Space”), Grapard analyzes the Hachiman cult’s formation in the Usa region of northeast Kyushu. He thoroughly investigates a variety of sources, from archaeological records to *engi* narratives (which he translates as “etiological records”). He shows that Hachiman, the oldest “combinatory cult” (that is, an amalgamation of autochthonous and imported beliefs), was created under continental influences, and elaborated as a result of political alliances between regional leaders of northern Kyushu and the Yamato court (p. 5). Grapard accurately portrays the competition between the Usa Shrine’s sacerdotal houses, the influence of the Miroku (Maitreya) cult and Tendai esoteric doctrine, Hachiman’s status in the early imperial cultic system, supported by his identification with Emperor Ōjin and his receipt of the title “bodhisattva.”

Grapard does not aim to illuminate every aspect of the Hachiman cult in this book; his focus is on spatial features. However, it is unfortunate that he does not, for example, provide evidence as to why the Buddhist rite of atonement (*hōjō-e*)—intended to erase the sin of killing sentient beings—contains such non-Buddhist elements as purifying “the ritual pollution garnered by the court’s political decisions to kill human beings in the process of territory building” (p. 102).

1 See Castiglioni, Rambelli, and Roth 2020, pp. 1–18.

2 Grapard 1982, pp. 209–210.

The spatial aspects of the Hachiman cult are effectively illustrated in the ritual procession called the “Stately Progress Ritual Assembly” (*gyōkō-e*), which Grapard addresses in a section styled, “Hachiman’s Traveling Icons.” Every six years from the ninth through to the eighteenth century, “icons” (*mishirushi*) symbolizing the Hachiman triad of Emperor Ōjin or Hachiman himself, his mother Empress Jingū, and his wife Himegami, were reproduced, and presented to the eight shrines auxiliary to the Usa complex. This set of rites, which was abandoned in the Edo period (1603–1867), has been the object of dispute among Japanese scholars. Some explain it as a display of the superiority of the Usa complex over other sites of the Hachiman cult in northern Kyushu.³ Others emphasize the connection of Hachiman (as Emperor Ōjin) with the imperial cultic system, and associate the pillow (*komo-makura*) used as Hachiman’s seat during the procession with the pillow (*saka-makura*) used in the *daijōsai* imperial succession ritual.⁴ Grapard himself interprets this parade of icons as a “reminder of the powerful unifying force of the court-sponsored Hachiman cult,” which defined the territorial dominance of the Usa complex (p. 98). His interpretation here seems most apposite. Medieval narratives concerning the stately progress associate it with Great Bodhisattva Ninmon’s quest for *nirvāna*. Ninmon is considered a founder of the Kunisaki Peninsula’s system of twenty-eight temples, and a reincarnation of Hachiman. Grapard finds this association intriguing, but offers no further analysis. My own study of the Hachiman *engi* narratives suggests that the progress reflects the unique feature of the Usa cult, which is the association of Hachiman with mountain religious practitioners or *shugenja*.

In chapter 3, Grapard emphasizes that sacred space is also “thoroughly managed social space” (p. 161). Here he investigates the Usa complex as a powerful institution involved in politics: “The symbolic world of the Hachiman cult rests on oracles related to travel narratives, bespeaking of territorial conquest and control” (p. 213). He draws here on an analysis of the early fourteenth-century *Hachiman Usa-gū gotakusenshū*, a compilation of oracular pronouncements made by Hachiman, and interpreted by the compiler. Grapard points out that many of the pronouncements focus on space. The pronouncements of the third scroll describe the peregrinations of Hachiman, who manifested himself in various forms in various places. Grapard finds a similar pattern of territorial discovery and control in the medieval “Chronicles of Yamatohime no Mikoto” (*Yamatohime no mikoto seiki*), which described the journey of the legendary Yamatohime, in her search for a suitable site to enshrine Amaterasu. The last section “Usa: Hachiman’s Return in Disguise” of chapter 4 briefly describes how in 1868 the “combinatory deity” Hachiman was reconstructed as a native *kami* after the government-directed separation of Shinto from Buddhism, and was subsequently put to the service of Japanese ultranationalism in the Meiji period (1868–1912).

The study of the Hachiman cult has developed considerably in recent years. For example, Murata Shin’ichi has examined oracle pronouncements of Usa Hachiman.⁵ Hinokuma Masamori has investigated disputes between Usa and Kagoshima Shrine in southwest Kyushu regarding issues of authority and the origins of the Hachiman cult.⁶ It is

3 Murata 2016, pp. 324–325.

4 Tsuji 2003, pp. 290–291.

5 Murata 2016.

6 Hinokuma 2011.

regrettable that our author's bibliography is out of date, and does not include this and other more recent research.⁷ Nonetheless, it is my view that *Mountain Mandalas* is the marvelous outcome of many years of work, and a profoundly insightful analysis of historical sources. *Mountain Mandalas* enhances our knowledge of Hachiman, and revises the "common but erroneous and oversimplistic view that Hachiman is the Shinto God of War" (p. 5).

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7 I am thinking here of works in Japanese by Iinuma Kenji, Kitai Toshio, Tamura Masataka, and Tsuji Hidenori, and in English by Bernhard Scheid.