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Notes on the Revolution of the Image of Shugendō
—Centering on the 1970s and 1990s—

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1. Introduction: The “Shugendō Information Boom”

The teachings of Shugendō and *yamabushi* (practitioner of Shugendō) are now appearing frequently in media as embodiments of “Japanese culture” and “the Japanese mind.” According to Sakura Haratani, while rituals and ascetic practices by practitioners have been presented as tourist attractions and traditional events in newspapers and magazines since the 1990s, “Shugendō” itself is depicted positively as a tourist attraction and cultural property.ⁱ In particular, with the registration of Yoshino and Kumano with UNESCO World Heritage as “Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range” in 2004, Shugendō was officially recognized internationally as “culture” to be proud of.

However, the recognition of Shugendō should be considered “an extremely exceptional situation,” historically speaking. For example, there is a traditional expression in Japan that refers to insistent salespersons and night burglars as “ashes of the homa” (thieves posing as fellow travelers). Its origin is said to stem from the bad business practices of Shugendō practitioners and traveling religious persons, so it can be said that image of Shugendō and the *yamabushi* has been associated with a kind of “shadiness” or disreputable character. Tarō Wakamori, a pioneer in the historical study of Shugendō, explains that while the *yamabushi* were sometimes considered more reliable than even gods and Buddhas in folktales and legends, they were also depicted as eerie, similar to depictions of goblins and ghosts.ⁱⁱ The folklorist Shinobu Orikuchi’s study of the *yamabushi* appears to be “about rogues (「ごろつきの話」)” if we just look at the title.ⁱⁱⁱ The *yamabushi* were religious practitioners, but at the same time, they were also a kind of peripheral existence vis-à-vis society. That is, this aforementioned extremely exceptional situation signifies an elevation of the social perception of Shugendō from something associated with a kind of negativity to a culture to be proud of. How did this revolution come to take place?

At the same time, we have obtained some rather interesting data. Figure 1-1 is a graph that shows how the number of masters in religious organizations or temples with deep links to Shugendō has changed over the last 20 years, referencing the *Religious Yearbook* of the Japanese Agency for Cultural Affairs. Let us take a look at the Shōgo-in Temple of the Honzan

Branch, the Daigo Sanbō-in Temple of the Tōzan Branch, and the Kinpusen-ji Temple in Yoshino, which were centers of Shugendō in the early-modern period.

| | Honzan Shugen-shū (Shōgo-in) | Shingon Daigo Branch (Daigo Sanbō-in) | Kinpusen Shugen Honshū (Kinpusen-ji) |
|------|---------------------------------|--|---|
| 1995 | 1287 | 4247 | 2892 |
| 1996 | 1247 | 4170 | 2715 |
| 1997 | 1258 | 4137 | 2715 |
| 1998 | 1278 | 4149 | 2104 |
| 1999 | 1213 | 4119 | 2203 |
| 2000 | 1195 | 4298 | 2240 |
| 2001 | 1203 | 4119 | 2128 |
| 2002 | 1182 | 4119 | 2136 |
| 2003 | 1143 | 3885 | 1848 |
| 2004 | 1071 | 3765 | 1840 |
| 2005 | 1101 | 3735 | 1809 |
| 2006 | 1090 | 3700 | 1773 |
| 2007 | 1073 | 2272 | 1730 |
| 2008 | 1039 | 3481 | 1788 |
| 2009 | 975 | 3286 | 1659 |
| 2010 | 932 | 3237 | 1734 |
| 2011 | 929 | 3208 | 1727 |
| 2012 | 890 | 3146 | 1714 |
| 2013 | 868 | 3058 | 1696 |
| 2014 | 864 | 3009 | 1672 |

As made obvious by the above data, the number of masters at the three central head temples of Shugendō has been decreasing gradually over the last 20 years. The Shingon Daigo Branch saw a decrease of about 30 percent (4,247 to 3,009), the Kinpusen Shugen Honshū, about 43 percent (2,892 to 1,672), and the Honzan Shugen-shū, about 33 percent (1,287 to 864). The Kinpusen Shugen Honshū decreased the most, while all of the temples decreased by 30 percent or more.

Next, let us look at the numbers of sectarian Shinto organizations,^{iv} which have deep links to Shugendō and ascetic practice at mountain retreats even today. The years that do not connect on the Ontake-kyō graph are due to missing data in the *Religious Yearbook* (宗教年鑑). Similar to the central head temples, the number of masters in these ascetic organizations has also decreased. Ontake-kyō saw a decrease by about 51 percent (2,677 to 1,313), Fusō-kyō by about 59 percent (987 to 407), and Maruyama-kyō by about 23 percent (605 to 467). Only Maruyama-kyō saw a slightly smaller decrease than the former central head temples, while Ontake-kyō saw a decrease of as much as half and all sectarian Shinto organizations are seeing the numbers decrease continuously. The data here reveal that Shugendō has become a cultural property, and that changes in media representation have not led to an increase in leaders in the relevant organizations.

| | Ontake-kyō | Fusō-kyō | Maruyama-kyō |
|------|------------|----------|--------------|
| 1995 | 2677 | 987 | 605 |
| 1996 | 2677 | 987 | 593 |
| 1997 | | 987 | 613 |
| 1998 | | 987 | 594 |
| 1999 | 2517 | 844 | 596 |
| 2000 | | 844 | 586 |
| 2001 | 2444 | 726 | 565 |
| 2002 | 2344 | 749 | 564 |
| 2003 | 2302 | 563 | 567 |
| 2004 | 2214 | 566 | 569 |
| 2005 | 2152 | 566 | 561 |
| 2006 | 2141 | 571 | 563 |
| 2007 | 2096 | 571 | 553 |
| 2008 | 2069 | 571 | 542 |
| 2009 | 1966 | 561 | 526 |
| 2010 | 1926 | 500 | 520 |
| 2011 | | 378 | 499 |
| 2012 | | 407 | 493 |
| 2013 | 1357 | 407 | 468 |
| 2014 | 1313 | 407 | 467 |

Religious sociologist Nobutaka Inoue has researched new religions, and argues that we need to differentiate between “religious booms,” where there is a growing interest in religion itself, and a “religious information boom” where there is only a growing interest in religion “as information.” According to Inoue, what characterizes a religious information boom is that there is massive increase in discussion about the religion, unlike “religious booms” where there is actual increased activity in the religious organization, as well as an increase in the number of people involved in the religion.^v This paper applies Inoue’s theory to hypothetically frame the recent Shugendō movements, specifically, that media dissemination of positive information about Shugendō, paired with an absence of actual numerical growth in membership, is a “Shugendō information boom.” This study also seeks to trace the origin of the information boom around Shugendō and document how the representation of Shugendō has changed. Finally, this paper will clarify the contexts in which people currently consume information about Shugendō.

2. Eve of the Boom

When considering what sparked the Shugendō information boom in Japanese society, we have one person’s interesting testimony to draw from. Byron Earhart, who has left behind numerous accomplishments through his study of Haguro Shugen, first visited Japan in 1963 and conducted an investigation of the *aki no mine* in Mount Haguro in Yamagata Prefecture, together with Carmen Blacker from Cambridge University and Hitoshi Miyake.

Earhart recalls “[m]y path toward studying Japan’s religions was somewhat peculiar.” He studied religion under Mircea Eliade and Joseph Kitagawa at the University of Chicago, and produced a master’s thesis titled *Worldview of the Zuni Indians*. Earhart was not initially interested in Japan or Shugendō practice. According to him, it was Joseph Kitagawa who

recommended that he research Shugendō. Kitagawa told him that it was possible to observe “rich ancient tradition” and “folk religion” in Japan, and recommended the Earhart write his doctoral dissertation on the topic of Shugendō, claiming it was “on a rather manageable scale.” Luckily, Earhart heeded this advice. He won a Fulbright scholarship and spent three years with Ichirō Hori, who was an acquaintance of Kitagawa.

Earhart published a portion of the fruits of his diligent study in Japan in *A Religious Study of the Mount Haguro Sect of Shugendō: An Example of Japanese Mountain Religion*.^{vi} A Japanese translation was also published in 1985, and it is to this Japanese version that I want to draw attention here. The preface to the Japanese version contains clues to how Shugendō was perceived in Japan at that time. According to Earhart, Shugendō was barely known in Japan at the time.

“When I conducted research on Shugendō, it was barely known in Japan and more or less unknown in countries outside of Japan. When my wife and I lived in Japan almost 20 years ago, Japanese people were rarely familiar with the word Shugendō, and when I answered their questions about my research, I had to define Shugendō for them.”

Of course, it is not that there were no Japanese persons who knew about Shugendō at the time. As seen in Tarō Wakamori’s *Research on the History of Mountain Religion* (『修験道史研究』 1942) and Toshio Murakami’s *The Development of Shugendō* (『修験道の発達』 1943), it is a well-known fact that research dealing comprehensively with Shugendō had already been published during the war. While we do not know how many publications there were, there must have been resident practitioners of Shugendō, such as *yamabushi* and *ogamiya*, as well.

If so, why did it seem to Earhart’s that Japanese people in general were unfamiliar with “Shugendō”? A good reference here are the questions about the concept of “Shugendō” raised by Takuma Shirakawa in recent years. Shirakawa interviewed the chief priests of the Rokugō Manzan mountain temples on the Kunisaki Peninsula in Kyushu, and felt “a discrepancy” between the conceptual framework of Shugendō that he had studied academically until that point and the experiential framework of the monks he interviewed. The elderly and reticent chief priests told Shirakawa that they found it “unnerving” to be called ascetic practitioners and *yamabushi*. Shirakawa took this impression of the Rokugō Manzan monks, and borrowing the words of Pierre Bourdieu, described his experience as such— “The Rokugō Manzan monks have a historically accumulated aggregation (habitus) of practical experience, and that does not conform with the framework of Shugen studies.”^{vii} Besides this, Shirakawa also gave examples of how the researchers’ image of the *yamabushi* and aspects of Shugendō were mocked and repudiated by local practitioners. Through such experiences, Shirakawa came to understand the view that the “folk religion as a real concept” called Shugendō does not exist at Rokugō Manzan. Rather, there was “an aggregation of living practice that has accumulated and been distilled through a long historical process,” which we may refer to as a “Buddhist habitus.”^{viii}

The reason I believe the points Shirakawa made are helpful for understanding the situation described by Earhart is that they show us the possibility that the word “Shugendō” was not widely understood in the Japan of the 1960s as a real concept that encompasses religious practitioners conducting activities associated within *yamabushi*. Shirakawa himself introduces a perplexing episode where he described a youth robed in white as a *yamabushi* (more precisely, he asked a local if that was a *yambushi*) and was met with “That ain’t no *yamabushi*!”^{ix} In his discussion, he mentions that there were those who made widely known the existence of Shugendō as a real concept, in particular, the Hitoshi Miyake Research Team

at Keio University, where research activities were conducted over a period of almost 50 years under the guidance of Hitoshi Miyake, one of the foremost researchers of Shugendō.

This paper will not discuss to what extent academic notions helped form the recognition of Shugendō as a socially comprehensive concept. However, in terms of chronological importance, the *Research Series on the History of Mountain Religions* (『山岳宗教史研究叢書』), which collected research on sacred mountains all over Japan from 1975 to 1984, is a major event in the academic treatment of Shugendō. Around the same time, the Association for the Study of Mountain Religion in Western Japan, which is the origin of the current Association for the Study of Japanese Mountain Religion, was founded in 1980 in connection with the growing research awareness. The name was changed to the Association for the Study of Japanese Mountain Religion in 1994. Moreover, during that time, the *Shugendō Dictionary* (『修験道辞典』 1986), the first comprehensive dictionary on Shugendō, was published. This demonstrates that focused activities in research collection, the creation of an academic association, and the making of a dictionary took place during the 1970's. The question of how this is organically related to the recognition of Shugendō by the general public is a topic best addressed in future research, but at the very least, one must acknowledge that in the eyes of researchers coming to Japan in the early 1960s, "Shugendō was barely known" among Japanese people and they were "unfamiliar with the word Shugendō."

3. The Shugendō Boom

Now, around what time did the concept of "Shugendō" become generally accepted? In search for clues to this, we must look to the work of Toshio Murakami. Murakami may be the first person to use the term "Shugendō boom" to describe the growing popularity of Shugendō in general society.

Murakami was born in Tokushima Prefecture in Meiji 39 (1906) and graduated from the Department of Religious History, Faculty of Letters, University of Tokyo in Shōwa 5 (1930). He worked as an assistant at the Faculty of Letters and then served as religious affairs official with the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. During his time at the ministry, Murakami was in charge of religious surveys and religious administration, so that he could collect documents about Shugendō as part of his job. He also wrote *The Development of Shugendō*, which was published in 1943, using mainly sources from this time based on "a historical view of Shugendō's decline in the early-modern period," so the word Shugendō boom also does not appear in the 1943 version.

In his 1943 preface, Murakami wrote that just as his Shugendō research was getting underway, he "was finally given official orders to travel south." He was ordered to accompany the Sixteenth Army to Java. He had to go on a military mission without even seeing the galley proofs first. He wrote in the preface "The morning I set out on my journey south" and later said that "I wrote that with tears in anticipation of the morning of the day when I had to depart without knowing if I'd live or not." The book was published without him being able to revise the draft himself, and then reprinted as an enlarged and revised edition in 1978, exactly 35 years later. It was in this revised edition that the word Shugendō boom made its appearance. According to Murakami, he was advised to make "a significantly revised edition at this time that we may call a 'Shugendō boom.'" What was this 1978 Shugendō boom like, seen through the eyes of Murakami, who had researched Shugendō since the wartime years? This paper will explore his work in closer detail.

In his preface to the new edition, Murakami writes “In the last few years, there has been a strong new trend toward seeing a development of Japanese religious history centering on Shugendō and esoteric Buddhism” and that “[a] strong interest in mysticism and the occult” was boosting the Shugendō research. While this kind of analysis of the state of Shugendō studies was not very common back then, we have every reason to agree with Murakami’s claim if we consider the intellectual situation of the late 1970s and beyond.

What was the social situation of Japan in the late 1970s and thereafter? We first ought to mention the decline of high economic growth as a defining feature of Japanese society at this time. Following the Second World War, the Japanese economy recovered in a manner that can be described as miraculous, but after an oil shock in 1973, growth turned negative for the first time in the post-war period. Moreover, the negative consequences of mass production and mass consumption in the form of Minamata disease, “itai-itai” disease, and other pollution-caused illnesses cast a dark shadow on society in the final years of high economic growth. You could say that the 1970s in Japan was a time when the contradictions inherent in the concepts of “modernization” and “growth,” which Japan had recklessly pursued until this point, became manifest in society.

It was not only in Japan that doubts were raised about the models for modernization and growth. Susumu Shimazono diagnosed this situation in the 1970s and beyond, stating that “[s]ince the 1970s, amid the advance of globalization and the penetration of American free competition, the community safety nets that protected individuals have been undone one after the other, exposing the naked individual mind to a ruthless society.” He called it an age of “intensified desires for a self that seeks recovery from pain as well as a self that seeks the success and prosperity of oneself and others, amid growing stress in a competitive and unequal society.”^x

What was boosted by these desires was an interest in the “world of the spirit.” The world of the spirit “has to do with psychological and mental transformation as well as self-exploration, self-realization, self-transcendence, and self-liberation.” It is a “‘world’ where a variety of pieces of information and practices that relate to ‘my own journey’ and spiritual growth coexist.” According to Shimazono, the hijacking of Japan Airlines Flight 351 in 1970, the Asama-Sansō incident and the United Red Army lynching in 1972, the company serial bombings in 1974, and other social incidents caused by violent revolutionaries strongly imprinted on the minds of the youth that the era of politics was over. He argues that the struggling economy and distrust against politics rapidly drove people to the “world of the spirit.” Shimazono refers to movements that yearn for and seek to approach the world of the spirit as new spiritual movements. It is not difficult to imagine that this social and ideological situation contributed to Murakami seeing “a strong interest in mysticism and the occult.”

Additionally, among the “spiritual intellectuals”^{xi} who drove the social interest in the “world of the spirit” in this period, were many with a strong interest in “mountain retreats” and “ascetic practices.” Examples are Takeshi Umehara, Hayao Kawai, Tetsuo Yamaori, Munesuke Mita, Shin’ichi Nakazawa, and Tōji Kamata. They reappraised Shintoist-Buddhist syncretism as an expression of the Japanese harmonious mind as well as emphasizing oriental *practice* as superior to occidental (western) *belief*, themselves actively engaging in ascetic and mountain practices. The actions and statements of the spiritual intellectuals took on the role of having counter culture deeply permeate society as they appraised ascetic practices and mountain religion as possessing alternative value that could rival modernity.

Looking at the information for the general public communicated by the religious

organizations today, we can see how exceptionally great the influence of these spiritual intellectuals' narrative was. For example, in the book *Introduction to Shugendō* by Riten Tanaka from Kinpusen-ji Temple, he writes, "I wrote this book because I want people to know about this unique spiritual culture that is Shugendō, to know about the true figure of the *yamabushi*."^{xii} We can see that he perceived Shugendō as "spiritual culture."

The same book also talks about Shugendō's value as culture that can counter Western modernity, as follows:

Far from living together, the world exhibits religious wars where enemies do not hesitate to obliterate one another. By contrast, [Shugendō] can even become a model case for coexistence and living together.

Where will we end up if globalization "dyes" the entire world in a uniform value system based on a monotheistic ideology like Christianity or Islam? [Discussion about 9/11 and other examples.] At present, the world is starting to take notice of this grim fact. At this point in time, we find the secret to religions and peoples living together in polytheistic worldviews that acknowledge differences in values, such as those nurtured by Yoshino Ōmine, Kumano, Takano, and the sacred mountains, as the antipode of globalization.^{xiii}

Let me give another example.

In today's modern materialist society, I strongly feel the need for Shugendō as a way to question again what the human existence is, about how to live together with nature, about the power of doctrine to practically enhance our human resources [...]^{xiv}

From these excerpts, we can glimpse how the Shugendō practitioners' recursive self-perception reflects the ideology of the spiritual intellectuals. A very likely reason for their active use of the spiritual intellectuals' words is the existence of a kind of social demand for that. I believe that we may interpret the "Shugendō boom" that Toshio Murakami felt as a growing interest in the world of spirituality, as well as in Shugendō as an alternative value to Western modernity, starting in the late 1970s.

4. Developments in Cultural Property Administration and Shugendō as a Tourist Attraction

What happened to the late-1970s "Shugendō boom"? According to Shimazono, the attention paid to the world of the spirit in the 1970s has lived on as a movement in the spiritual and power spot booms of today. Currently, there are many locations considered power spots at Shugendō sacred mountains and sites, which seems to be in agreement with Shimazono's claim that the Shugendō boom emerged from a growing interest in the world of the spirit. At the same time, in the case of Shugendō, we can identify another factor that had a major impact on the social recognition of Shugendō in the 1990's.

As in the previous sections, we can allow ourselves to be guided by a researcher who was active at the time. When writing the book, *The World of Shugendō* (『修験の世界』) in 1992, the historian Shūichi Murayama made the following analysis about people's growing interest in

Shugendō.

It has already been more than 20 years since I had *The History of the Yamabushi* (『山伏の歴史』) published from Hanawa shobō. During this time, people's interest in Japan's tangible and intangible cultural properties and historical sites has soared, and publications and mass media talk about Shugendō have now become common sights, also assisted by the tourism boom. [...] It has even become a means to village and town revitalization projects among local governments struggling with depopulation.

That “the interest in Shugendō is growing” was unchanged from the late 1970s, but Murakami sought the cause of this not in a growing interest in spiritual culture, but in people's growing interest in cultural properties and in the tourism boom. What was this soaring interest in tangible and intangible cultural properties and historical sites that he discussed?

Let us look back at Japan's cultural property administration at that time. In Japan, the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties (1950) was revised in 1975. Since that time, rituals, arts, shrines, temples, and ceremonies related to mountain religions have been registered and nationally designated as intangible folk cultural properties, but there were two events that gave a major boost to the registration of things related to mountain religions as cultural properties and protected heritage. The first was that Japan ratified the World Heritage Convention and adopted the Law on the Promotion of Tourism and Designated Local Commerce and Industry through the Use of Local Traditional Arts and Such, also known as the Festival Act. Masataka Suzuki, who currently serves as the chairman of the Association for the Study of Japanese Mountain Religion, points out that these legal provisions have opened up the path for Shugendō to be reinterpreted from a religion to a “traditional culture.”^{xv} He says that it is now actively utilized to revitalized local areas and as a tourism resource. In fact, a major outcome of the cultural property administration has been the World Heritage registration of the “Shrines and Temples of Nikko” in 1999, Yoshino and Kumano as “Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range” in 2004, and Mount Fuji as “Fujisan, Sacred Place and Source of Artistic Inspiration” in 2013, which has led to an increase in tourism. In the case of Yoshino and Kumano, which are sacred sites central to Shugendō, there are those areas that recorded an increase of more than 200 percent in tourists compared to the year before the World Heritage registration.^{xvi} The promotion of cultural property administration in the 1990s simultaneously made Shugendō a tourist attraction, and had a powerful impact on the current “Shugendō information boom.”

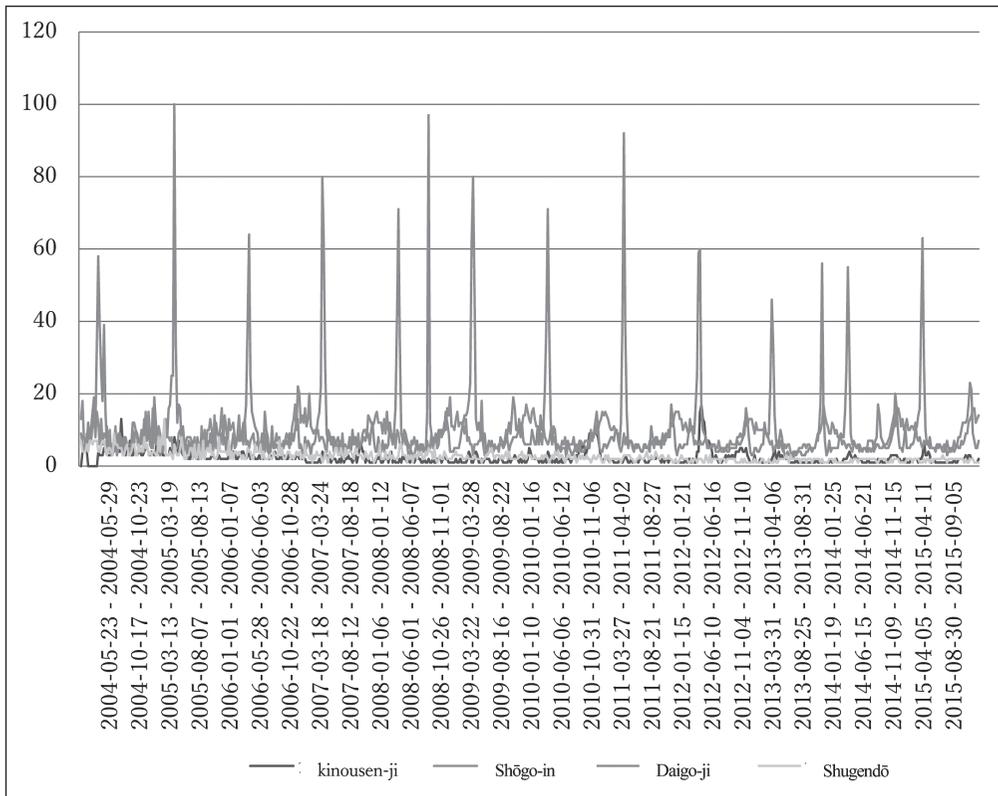


Figure 4-1

Figure 4-1 above demonstrates how much the keywords “Kinpusen-ji,” “Shōgo-in,” “Daigo-ji,” and “Shugendō” have been searched on the world’s largest search engine, Google.^{xiii} The vertical axis is percentages and shows each value’s proportion relative to the highest search value, which is defined as 100. The horizontal graph depicts the time periods when the keywords were searched.

If we look at these data, we can see that the names of individual temples, like “Kinpusen-ji” and “Daigo-ji” were searched more frequently than “Shugendō,” for example, if “Daigo-ji” was searched one hundred times in April 2005, then “Shugendō” was only searched five times at most. Of note in this graph is that the number of searches for each keyword goes up during the cherry blossom and fall color seasons as well as long holidays. Moreover, Google provides users with a list of the words most frequently searched together, with the keywords grouped together as “related words.” If we look at the related words for Daigo-ji, the temple that was searched most frequently, we find “Daigo,” “Kyoto Daigo-ji,” “Daigo-ji sakura,” “Daigo sakura,” “Daigo-ji access,” and “Kyoto sakura.” This result suggests that it is extremely likely that most people searching for the temple names do so as a destination during cherry blossom and fall color seasons as well as long holidays.

Figure 4-2 below depicts how often the keywords “Shugendō,” “Honzan Shugen-shū,” “Kinpusen Shugen Honshū,” and “Shingon-shū Daigo-ha” have been Googled.

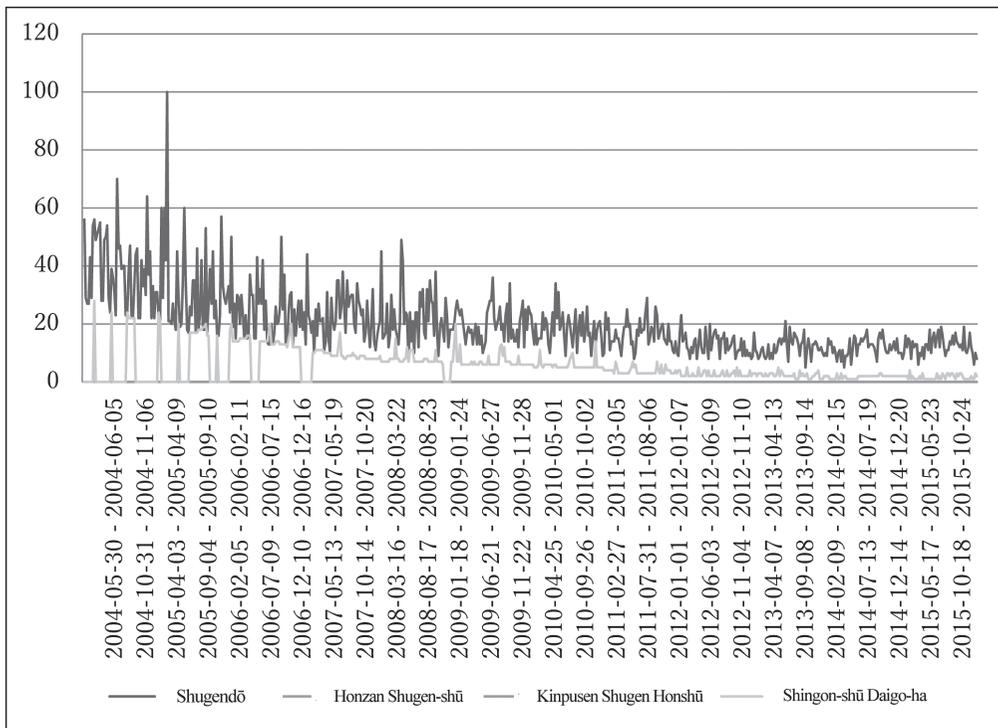


Figure 4-2

This graph tells us that since Google made their analytical data available in 2004, there has been a decline in people searching for Shugendō and the names of each religious organization or temple. With the exception of the Shingon Daigo Branch, if Shugendō searches totaled 100 at the end of 2004, the number of searches for the other organizations was so low that they constantly averaged zero. We cannot be sure, since we do not have access to pre-2004 data, but it is likely that the registration of the Shugendō sacred temples of Yoshino and Kumano as World Heritage “Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range” is the reason for 2004 being the year with the most searches of Shugendō. Since then, the number of searches has gradually decreased, which might indicate an easing of the “World Heritage Effect.” In any case, if we look at search engine trends, we may note that while information about Shugendō as a tourist attraction enjoys a certain niche level of interest, interest in the religious practice of “Shugendō” itself, and in the individual religious organizations and temples that practice it is extremely small.

5. Conclusion

This paper has analyzed what sparked the change in how Shugendō is represented, both within Japan and internationally, as well as what differentiates the present-day consumption of Shugendō information from the “Shugendō information boom.” I will conclude by briefly summarizing the points made and suggesting opportunities for future research.

First, this paper has identified two main factors that sparked the transformation in how Shugendō is represented:

1. Late 1970s: growing attention to the world of the spirit, and
2. 1990s: Shugendō becomes culture, heritage, and a tourist attraction through cultural property administration.

With regard to the first factor, I pointed out that “Shugendō” gathered attention as an alternative to Western modernity as it was reaching its limits, and was especially lauded by so-called “spiritual intellectuals.” Such evaluations became incorporated in the narratives of people in religious organizations today. With regard to the second factor, I pointed out that not only did the promotion of cultural property administration give value to Shugendō as culture, but it also made it a tourist attraction.

Furthermore, in the context of tourism today, Shugendō is often simultaneously an alternative to modernity and the culture spoken of. For example—

“Just like the Three Mountains of Dewa that face the Sea of Japan have one expression for each of the four seasons, Haguro Shugendō conducts different practices depending on the season called the seasonal peaks (*mine*). In one of them, *aki no mine* (the peak of fall), you practice rebirth, establishing the idea you can resurrect the life that is a struggling living. This is said to be the only ritual of death and rebirth in Japan today that has been passed down since medieval times.

The practitioners see the movements of the cosmos inherently present in all things in nature: in the single weed that sways in the mountain wind, in every animal, and in themselves. This idea of coexisting with all living things in the natural world, learning to respect life, and showing consideration for each other is sure to resonate with the hearts of so many people and deepen their lives.

Haguro Shugendō contains a distant gaze and an abundant potential that should be passed on to the future, and it is alive and well in the Three Mountains of Dewa even today.”^{xiii}

This is a description of Haguro Shugendō by the Haguro Town Tourist Association in Tsuruoka City, Yamagata Prefecture, which lies next to the Three Mountains of Dewa, famous as sacred mountains in Shugendō. They emphasize that Haguro Shugendō is a tradition that goes back to medieval times and has the message of coexisting and living together with nature. This shows that information about Shugendō today can be traced back to both factors above.

To reiterate the point, how Shugendō is represented has so far not led to any increase in people active in its religious organizations and temples. However, it is up for debate whether this trend will change in the future. As previously mentioned, the promotion of cultural property administration has made Shugendō a tourist attraction, providing people with more opportunities to interact with Shugendō religious organizations. The organizations know this well, and we can see that they are organizing events that promote their cultural property status through the unveiling of hidden Buddhist images, ascetic practice experiences, lectures, and other initiatives to attract tourists. The decrease in masters as the leaders of Shugendō religious organizations can be seen as an increase if we consider the disappearance and decline of traditional Buddhist practice and an overall aging population in Japan. However, the question of whether or not the Shugendō can ever expand by creating a “Shugendō information boom” centered on tourism is the challenge that Shugendō practitioners and Japan face today.

- ⁱ See Sakura Haratani, “Trends in the Representation of Shugendō Today: Newspapers and Magazines,” *Mountain Religion* 46 (2010).
- ⁱⁱ See Sakura Haratani, “Trends in the Representation of Shugendō Today: Newspapers and Magazines,” *Mountain Religion*, 46 (2010).
- ⁱⁱⁱ It first appeared in *Folk Arts, Vol. 1, Nos. 8-9*, 1928. It was reprinted in the *Complete Works of Shinobu Orikuchi*, Chūō kōronsha, 1995.
- ^{iv} I categorized the “sectarian Shinto organizations” by following Hitoshi Miyake. See Hitoshi Miyake, *Research on Shugendō Organizations*, Shunshūsha, 1999 for more details.
- ^v Nobutaka Inoue, *Deciphering New Religions* (Chikuma gakugei bunko, 1996) 221-223.
- ^{vi} Published by Sophia University Press in 1970.
- ^{vii} Takuma Shirakawa, “The Buddhist Habitus: Rethinking Shugendō,” *The Whisper of All Creation: Aspects of Research on Folk Religions* (Fūkyōsha, 2015) 419.
- ^{viii} Shirakawa, op. cit., 419-432.
- ^{ix} Shirakawa, op. cit., 420.
- ^x Susumu Shimazono, *Where Is the World of the Spirit? Modern Society and the New Spiritual Movements* (Tōkyōdō shuppan, 1996) 38.
- ^{xi} Susumu Shimazono, op. cit., 269-296.
- ^{xii} Riten Tanaka and Akira Masaki, *Introduction to Shugendō*, Shunshūsha, 2004, p. i.
- ^{xiii} Riten Tanaka and Akira Masaki, op. cit., 259-260.
- ^{xiv} From the En no Gyōja Renaissance prospectus. http://8-88.jp/onki_2.htm
The En no Gyōja Renaissance was an event that celebrated En no Gyōja, the founder of Shugendō, on the occasion of the 1300th anniversary of his death.
- ^{xv} Masataka Suzuki, *Mountain Religion* (Chūkō shinsho, 2015) 31-33.
- ^{xvi} Based on data from present-day Hongū Town, Tanabe City, Wakayama Prefecture, where Kumano Hongū Taisha is located.
- ^{xvii} I compiled this by using Google Trends. <https://trends.google.co.jp/trends/>
- ^{xviii} <http://hagurokanko.jp/shiru/hagurosyugendo/hagurosyugendou.html>