

# Study on Landscape of Mountains in Japan: Through Three Case Studies

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**Keywords:** Japan, landscape, Hanataka Mountains, Mount Koya, Mount Mekko

**Abstract:** This study organizes the transition of the Japanese meanings of mountains and considers the mountain landscape that inherited the Kuniyuki myth in the Izumo Plain, the sacred mountain landscape with multilayer boundaries in Mount Koya, and the landscape of Mount Mekko as a source of water on the Inamino Plateau. Mountain landscapes in Japan have multiple meanings; they are nature that has inherited myths, sources of water for daily life, sacred places for ascetic training, and are the most important landscapes for the Japanese as beautiful nature that always exists.

## Introduction

This study clarifies the characteristics of mountain landscapes in Japan based on mountain-related surveys conducted in several regions. Section 1 organizes the meanings of mountains in Japan in existing studies such as religious studies and folklore studies. Mountain landscapes in Japan have multiple meanings, this paper considers three case studies of important mountain landscapes in Japan with different characteristics. I describe the landscapes of mountains that inherited the myth of the creation of Japan by examining the changes in the topography of the Izumo Plain, the establishment of ancient roads, and the distribution of shrines (Section 2), the sacred mountain landscape of Shingon Buddhism by examining several boundaries of Mount Koya (Section 3), the mountain landscape of the settlement by examining the water system of the Inamino Plateau (Section 4).

Japan has been blessed with rich nature since ancient times. There is much rain and snow and the climate is warm, making it easy for plants to grow. The four seasons are clearly changing; there are many types of flowers that bloom, and these colors are rich. Cherry blooms occur in spring, the sky is blue, and trees have dark green leaves in summer, which turn red in fall, and snowy views are seen in winter.

Japan constitutes many mountains and has a long north-south terrain with many mountainous areas and differences in elevation. The mountains account for 76% of the land, and there are more than 20 mountains over 3000m. Surrounded by the blue sea, the topography is complex, and the coastline changes dramatically with small, beautiful bays between capes that jut out into the sea. There are calm fishing settlements, with peaceful views. It is blessed with abundant water and many clear lakes and rivers.

In Japan, even if natural disasters occur and the ground collapses, it does not turn into deserts; grass grows rapidly, and after a few decades, they transform to thickets or forests. The natural environment is maintained without any human intervention. Forests have always surrounded and enveloped people and have always been a place where they can easily hide. Mountains surrounded and protected settlements, and were

sources of "mountain food." In other countries, nature can be a threat because of its harsh natural environment; however, in Japan, resources for life are provided by nature, and we have always lived near nature and protected by it.

Japanese people have always had a close relationship with nature, with a sense of love and reverence similar to that of their mothers. This sensitivity is owing to favorable natural conditions in Japan. In Japan, there is a concept called "mono no aware," which means "knowing the pathos of things" or "feeling the pathos of things." It is the act of empathizing and uniting with individual events such as "things" such as moon, snow, cherry blossoms, and sight of flowers blooming.

For Japanese people, "mountains" have had an impact on their lifestyle, culture, and religion since ancient times, and have been historically important. This is because of natural conditions in Japan, and this environment led to mountain worship, in which the mountains themselves were the objects of worship. Clarifying the characteristics of Japanese mountain landscapes leads to a consciousness of the image of nature in present-day Japan, which serves as a clue to the image of nature that already exists in Japan under the influence of Western Europe.

## 1. Meanings of Mountains in Japan<sup>1</sup>

This section organizes the meaning of mountains in Japan over successive periods. In Japan, people believe that nature is alive and have attempted to blend in with nature and become one with it. Nature is worshiped as gods, and among the many gods of nature, there are many mountain gods. Mountains are tall, beautiful, and familiar or frightening, therefore they are worshiped as gods. People entered the mountains with God's permission and protection and faced them with reverence.

### 1.1. Primitive Age

#### 1.1.1. Jomon Period (circa 14,000 BC to 4th century BC)

During the Jomon period, people settled near rivers and springs at the foot of the mountains to obtain drinking water. They went into the mountains to chase deer, boars, and other animals; collected nuts and other fruits in the fall; and went into rivers and the sea to catch seafood. People's lives in primitive ages depended entirely on the direct blessings of nature. They believed that not only animals, but also trees, stones, springs, mountains, and rivers had life in all natural things, similar to humans, and worshiped them as gods of nature.

Among the ruins of the Jomon period are those known as stone-laying structures in which natural stones are intentionally arranged or combined. Archaeologists believe that stone-laying ruins are the remains of festival sites. Mount Fuji can be seen from the stone-laying Sengo ruins in Shizuoka Prefecture, and many similar examples can be seen at other ruins. The target mountains are all independent and beautifully shaped ones. It is believed that the Jomon people used the sites where the remains of the stone arrangement were located as festival sites, worshiped the mountains from there, and performed rituals.<sup>2</sup>

### 1.1.2. Yayoi Period (4th century BC to 3rd century)

People began to live at the foot of the mountains. They lived by clearing forests, cultivating rice in paddy fields, and collecting nuts and other fruits from the mountains behind them. During this age, when rice cultivation was the basis of life, irrigation water was vital. Mountains are sources of rivers, and mountain water was worshiped because it was the purest. Mountains were believed to be places where gods that provide water calmed down, and people began to build shrines and worship them near settlements at the foot of the mountains. Ceremonies were held to pray for each stage of rice cultivation, including seeding, planting, growth, first fruits, and harvest.

### 1.1.3. Kofun Period (4th to 6th century)

During this period, large burial mounds were built as tombs for people of high rank and power. In the keyhole-shaped tumulus, a type unique to Japan, the remains were buried in the circular parts of the tumulus and altars were set up in the front parts. The early ones had a high circular tumulus shaped like mountains, and this shape is reminiscent of the forms in which the dead buried in mountains were worshiped in a settlement and are believed to represent an old-fashioned festival of gods enshrined in mountains.<sup>3</sup> People buried in authority always look down on the lowlands they rule from their high positions. The tombs of successive emperors were called "mountain mausoleums," and the idea of passing away in the mountains can be seen in the names of keyhole-shaped tumuli and mountain mausoleums.

## 1.2. Ancient Ages

### 1.2.1. Asuka Period

Buddhism was introduced in Japan, temples were built in the mountains, and monks began to practice there. During this period, "Kunimi" was held, an act in which the emperor climbed mountains to see the country. "Kunimi-yama" were mountains that protruded from plains or were independent, and at an altitude of approximately 100 meters, those were relatively easy to climb. Kunimi was originally held as a pre-celebration event for farmers, however, was changed to a ritual for rulers. When the emperor climbed the mountain to view the country, he did not view the country spread out as simply a scene but with a sense of faith in nature.

### 1.2.2. Nara Period

Heijo-kyo is the capital of "Shishin-souou," an ideal topography for the four Taoist gods that was introduced from China, and is surrounded by mountains to the north, east, and west, and opens to the south with a river flowing through it. This land was considered the ideal location for feng-shui. Nara period is said to be the time when "Manyoshu," "Kojiki," and "Nihon-Shoki" were written, and these include ideas that admire and praise the scenery, and it is said that there was an idea of viewing beautiful scenery. Manyoshu contains poems about natural gods such as mountain and sea gods. Among these are a mixture of waka poems in which the mountains or the seas themselves are considered gods and waka poems in which the gods are said to be controlling the mountains or the seas themselves. In the early Manyoshu poems composed by members of the commoner class, the mountain gods were the mountains themselves, and in the later poems composed by educated aristocrats, the mountain gods were referred to as the people who ruled the mountain and were recognized as gods.<sup>4</sup> At first, Ama-no-kaguyama which was often written about in Manyoshu, Kojiki, and Nihon-Shoki itself was enshrined as the god, however, after it came under the influence of powerful clans, the god who lived on the mountain and ruled the place was believed to be the god who was enshrined as the personal God named "Kushimachi-no-Mikoto." Over time, mountain worship changed from worshiping the mountains themselves as gods to worshiping those who lived in and controlled the mountains.

### 1.2.3. Heian Period

Saicho and Ku-Kai established Buddhism, which uses sacred mountains as training places, influenced by mountain ascetic training from the Nara period onward. During the Asuka and Nara periods, most of the places where Buddhism was practiced were in the capital, however, during the Heian period, with the development of mountain forest training, the places of Buddhism moved into the mountains. During the early Heian period, political conflicts occurred successively, epidemics spread, and disasters such as earthquakes, eruptions, and floods were constant. People wanted to escape from these realities, and "Jodo-shinko," which prayed for the pure land of the next life rather than this one, became popular.

Japanese people did not fantasize about paradise or utopia as in Western Europe, but instead longed to live in real mountains. They considered mountains as extremely attractive worlds rich in natural beauty, isolated from sad worlds. Nobles of the Heian period had mountain villas as places of retreat from the world. Although they were far away from Kyoto, the mountains were not too far apart. Mountain villas with spectacular views and nature that could not be seen in the capital were places where aristocrats could enjoy singing and dancing, playing orchestral music, hunting, and parties. The lively parties there made them forget their daily worries, and by enjoying music in a particularly beautiful environment, they could feel as if they were in another world, pure land, which can be read in literary works of the Heian period.<sup>5</sup>

At the time of the transfer of the capital to Heian-kyo, it is said that the land of Kyoto had a topography suitable for Feng Shui theory, similar to Heijo-kyo, and according to "Nihon-kiryaku," a history book compiled during the Heian period, by this age the landform of Kyoto was considered a beautiful landscape suitable for the capital.<sup>6</sup>

## 1.3. Middle Ages

### 1.3.1. Kamakura Period

Around the early Kamakura period, a unique group called “Shugen-do” was formed by mountain ascetic monks. Shugen-do is a unique Japanese religion that worships mountains and aims to attain enlightenment by sequestering oneself in the mountains and performing rigorous training. In Shugen-do, there are many types of spirits in the mountains, centered around mountain gods. By encountering them, reaching the mountaintop, and looking up to the sun, Shugen-do acquires significant spiritual power.<sup>7</sup> Numerous mountains, such as Kumano, Yoshino, and Mount Haguro, and Mount Hiko were used as places of worship and had considerable influence on the common people from the Middle Ages to the Early Modern period.

### 1.3.2. Nanbokucho / Muromachi Period

During this period, landscape paintings “Sansui-ga” were brought from China through trade between Japan and Ming. Sansui-ga were deeply connected to gardens, literature, architecture, tea ceremonies, and flower arrangements, particularly in Zen temples during the Muromachi period. The nature in Sansui-ga is majestic, tranquil, and extraordinary. This was an ideal space for a hermit who wanted to live hidden from the outside world.

Sansui-ga significantly influenced garden design and created dry landscape gardens. During the Muromachi period, the garden format shifted from a pond-stroll garden to an appreciation-style garden, where the garden could be viewed from indoors or from the veranda-like porch. The spatial structure of the garden was expressed in a manner similar to a landscape painting when viewed from the interior.

## 1.4. Early Modern Times

### 1.4.1. Edo Period

During the middle of the Early Modern period, people began to actively climb sacred mountains throughout the country that had previously served as training places for monks and ascetics. For these people, mountains changed from being admired and worshiped at a distance to being admired and worshiped at the top of the mountain. For example, at Mount Fuji, ascetics who had trained their organized lectures to recruit followers of the Fuji faith, led pilgrimages to Mount Fuji. This is called “Fuji-ko,” but worship-ascents “ko” were also popular at other sacred mountains in various places, such as “Omine-ko” and “Mitake-ko.”

During the late Edo period, mountain ranges were depicted in “Ukiyo-e,” such as Hokusai Katsushika's “Fugaku-36-kei” (Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji) and Hiroshige Utagawa's “Tokaido-53-tsugi” (Fifty-three Stations of Tokaido). The mountain ranges painted by Hiroshige differ from the actual landscape. Hiroshige created ideal landscapes by drawing mountains larger than actual mountains and moving them away from their locations.

It was during this period that the term “Shakkei” (borrowed landscape) was established, which is believed to have existed as a concept since the Heian period. Entsuji Garden, a representative landscape garden, was built as a villa for the emperor, with a beautiful view of the mountains. It is believed that the Emperor was looking for a place from where Mount Hiei could be seen beautifully. Many landscape gardens, such as this one, which incorporate mountains outside the garden as the background, were created from the medieval period to the Early Modern period.

During the Edo period, while people actively climbed sacred mountains for worship, mountains were viewed not only as objects

of religious belief but also as beautiful natural landscapes, as seen in Shakkei gardens and Ukiyo-e paintings.

## 2. Izumo Plain and Hanataka Mountains<sup>8</sup>

Ancient Izumo is said to be the “starting place” of various cultures, including myths that tell the history of the creation of Japan. More than one-third of these myths were established in Izumo. This section investigates the changes in topography, the establishment of ancient roads, and the distribution of shrines in Izumo Plain, and describes the mountain landscape that inherits the “Kunibiki” myth.

### 2.1. Changes in Topography and Distribution of Shrines

#### 2.1.1. Changes in Topography and Establishment of Ancient Roads in Izumo Plain

The Kunibiki myth is that “Yatsuka-Mizuomi-Tsuno-no-Mikoto” sought to expand the country to enrich the lives of people of Izumo, which was a small country, and drew landmasses from four regions across the Sea of Japan. The area formed by dragging the country is the present-day Shimane Peninsula, which comprises four mountain massifs: Hanataka, Asahi, Dake-san, and Mihonoseki.<sup>9</sup>

The topography of the Izumo Plain has changed significantly from ancient to modern times, corresponding to myths. During the early Jomon period, Shimane Peninsula was an island nation completely separated from Chugoku Mountains by “Ko-Shinji” (Old Shinji) Bay. However, it is now an alluvial plain formed by the eruption of the Mount Sanbe and artificial development.

At the end of the last glacial period (approximately 11,000 years ago), the sea level was approximately -30 to -40 m, and the Shinji Lowland formed a valley with rivers flowing from east to west. During the early Jomon period (approximately 6,000 years ago), rising sea levels owing to global warming led to the formation of Ko-Shinji Bay, which separated the Shimane Peninsula from the Chugoku Mountains.

However, the eruptions of Mount Sanbe during the late Jomon period (approximately 4,000 years ago), supplied a large amount of earth and sand, and the formation of the western Izumo Plain progressed. The formation of the plain continued during the Yayoi period (approximately 2,000 years ago), reaching as far as the Shimane Peninsula. In the plains, two large rivers, the Kando River and the former Hii River, which originate on the western curved coast and Chugoku Mountains, and the inlet of Kando-Mizuumi, create a geographical environment in which water transportation can be safely used, and Japan Sea Trade with Kita-Kyushu, on the Korean Peninsula, developed. Through the Japan Sea Trade, various handicrafts developed, settlements rapidly expanded, and the use of the plains began to flourish.

During the Nara period (approximately 1,200 years ago), the formation of plains owing to the growth of deltas slowed, and the topography became stable. However, during the Edo period (approximately 300 years ago), a large amount of sand was carried downstream by the “Kanna-Nagashi” that was actively carried out upstream of Hii River, causing Hii River, which had been flowing westward, to flood. Subsequently, it completely changed to an easterly flow and the plains rapidly progressed. The Izumo Plain has rapidly expanded owing to two major factors: volcanic eruptions and artificial development.<sup>10</sup>

During the early Jomon period, the northwest coast of Kitsuki-Taisha (now Izumo-Taisha) was a ria coast that had been land since ancient times. “Tenpyo-Kodo” was built in the Hanataka Mountains, which connects the area around Kitsuki-

Taisha with the western part of Shimane Peninsula, where the gentle slopes of the mountains spread out. Before the early Jomon period, the southern foot of the Hanataka Mountains was a coastline, however, with the flattening of Ko-Shinji Bay, “Yamate-Okando” was built at the foot of the mountains along the original coastline. Thus, it is believed that the ancient roads were established in the order of the changes in topography, from Tenpyo-Kodo in the mountains to Yamate-Okando at the foot of the mountains, and then to Kitsuki-Okando in the plains (Figure 1).

### 2.1.2. Distribution of Shrines in Izumo Plain

The changes in topography have a substantial influence on the location of shrines. We investigated a distribution and listed its characteristics of important shrines during the Nara period, centered on “Izumo-no-Kuni-Fudoki,” which is the oldest document that lists all the shrines in Izumo Plain.

More shrines are listed in Izumo-no-Kuni-Fudoki in the mountains and foothills than in the plains. Among the mountains were many Shikinaishi (shrines listed in “Engishiki-Shinmeicho”) in the Hanataka Mountains and the Chugoku Mountains, and these areas were probably particularly important areas in Izumo Plain. The chief gods enshrined at the shrines in this region are Yamato or Izumo gods, however, many shrines enshrine Yamato gods on the Chugoku Mountains, and many shrines enshrine Izumo gods on the Shimane Peninsula side. In particular, the shrines of the Izumo gods were concentrated at the southern foot of the Hanataka Mountains, which was a coastline before the

Jomon period (Figure 1). Therefore, on the Izumo Plain, the Chugoku Mountains were influenced by the Yamato Court, and the Hanataka Mountains were areas where Izumo had a strong local influence. In ancient Izumo, specifically at the southern foot of the Hanataka Mountains was the central area that served as the seat of the gods.

Among the shrines in Izumo-no-Kuni-Fudoki, many “Domeisha” or “Dosha” (same-name shrines) are named after the same proper noun. Therefore, we investigated Domeisha, Dosha, and the places where they were enshrined before they were jointly enshrined. Among the existing Domeisha and Dosha with after the merger, “Kitsuki-sha” is concentrated around Kitsuki-Taisha, which indicates that the area around Kitsuki-Taisha was an important area. However, many shrines in Inu-go and Midami-go had Domeisha, Dosha before they were combined. Particularly in Inu-go, shrines with Domeisha, Dosha are spread over a wide area at the foot of the mountains.

The shrines, which once had Domeisha, Dosha, and continue to exist after their merger, are located at the foot of the mountains at a lower altitude than Tenpyo-Kodo and are built along Yamate-Okando, which is the primary route of daily life. However, these existing shrines were relocated further back in time, and many of them are believed to have been located along Tenpyo-Kodo at high altitudes. Thus, probably because of the increase in the number of people who worshiped there, the shrines in primordial form, such as natural objects along Tenpyo-Kodo, were relocated to locations closer to the settlements and were built as permanent shrines along Yamate-Okando, leading to Kitsuki-Taisha.

Many of the enshrined sites of Domeisha, Dosha that no longer existed before they were enshrined are believed to have

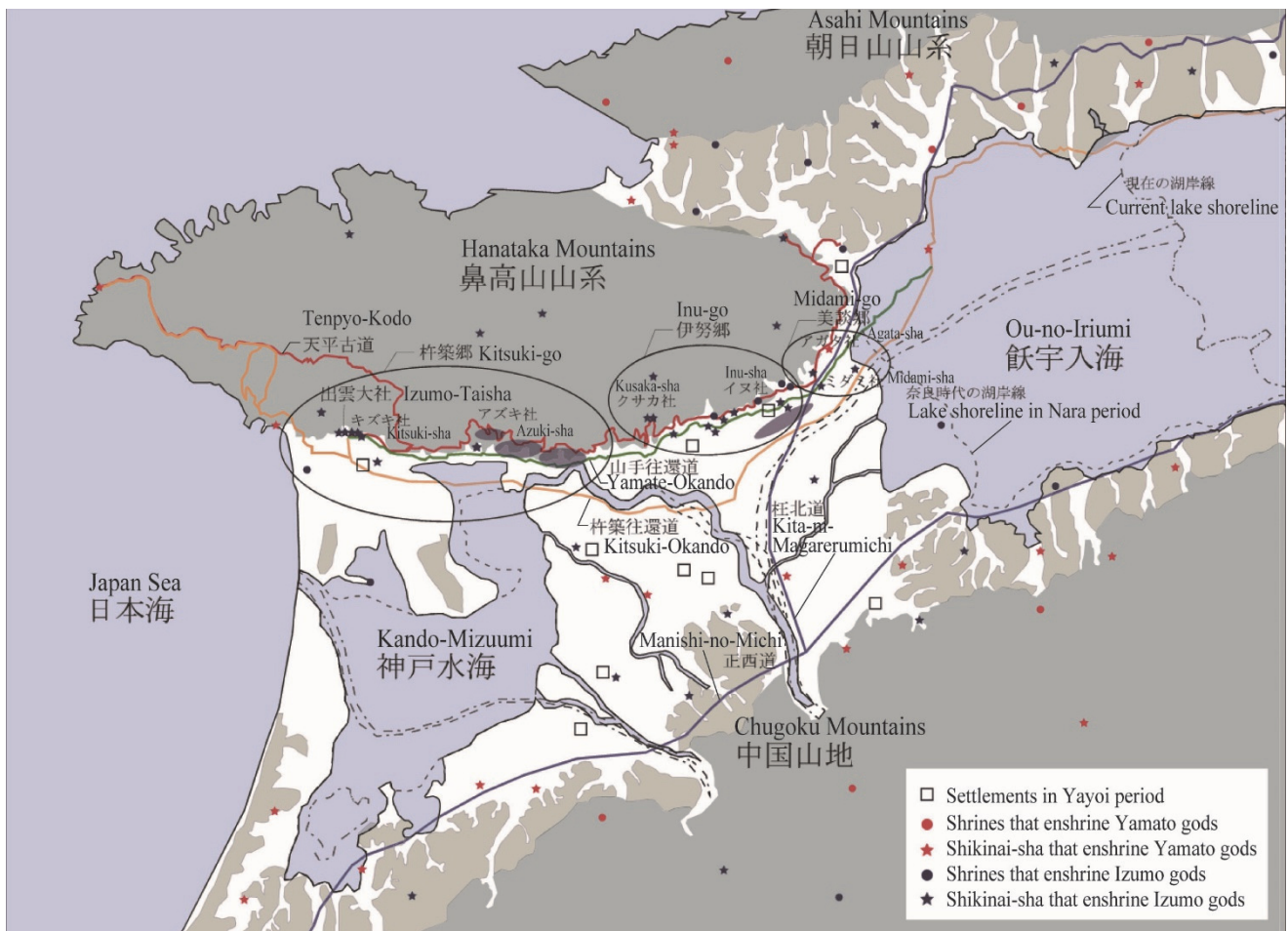


Figure 1. Distribution of shrines and the chief gods listed in Izumo-no-Kuni-Fudoki in the topography of Yayoi period<sup>1)</sup>

been in relatively high mountain areas. Nowadays, shrines are scattered at the foot of the mountains, but at the time of the compilation of *Izumo-no-Kuni-Fudoki*, it can be said that many shrines were distributed in a strip from the mountain area to the foot of the mountains. These shrines were built along Tenpyo-Kodo. The shrines that were scattered on the plains, although in small numbers, would have been located further back in time along the lake shorelines and rivers during the Yayoi period.

The distance between Kitsuki-sha and Azuki-sha in Kitsuki-go was greater than that between Inu-sha and Midami-sha in both Inu-go and Midami-go. It can be inferred that the distance between Kitsuki-sha and Azuki-sha increased because Kando-Mizuumi approximated in the foot of the mountains during the Yayoi period. During the Yayoi period, Japan Sea Trade was active with the Korean Peninsula and Kita-Kyushu, and lakes and rivers played important roles as trade routes. Thus, ancient shrines were built along these important “paths” that included lakes and rivers, and as the paths changed, the locations of the shrines also changed.

## 2.2. Mountain Landscape that Inherits the Myths

As expressed in the Kunibiki myth, the topography of the Izumo Plain changed significantly. As the island became connected to the Shimane Peninsula, and the sea turned into a plain, the roads of the Izumo Plain were established in the order of mountains, foothills, and plains. As the path changed, the appearance of ancient shrines changed from natural objects to permanent structures, such as shrine buildings, and the place of enshrinement shifted from the mountains to the foothills. The southern foot of the Hanataka Mountains, which used to be a coastline, is an important place as the land of the gods, and the historical landscape of the mountains has inherited the myths of ancient Izumo.

## 3. Mount Koya<sup>12</sup>

Mount Koya, founded by Ku-Kai as a place for training, has a long history as the head temple of Shingon Buddhism, and has had several boundaries since ancient times. This section examines the boundaries of Mount Koya and describes the landscape of the sacred mountain.

### 3.1. Mountain Boundaries

#### 3.1.1. *Shichiri-Kekkai*

At the beginning of the Heian period, Ku-Kai made Mount Koya his place for ascetic training, and to prevent impure objects from entering there, he built a barrier called the “Shichiri-Kekkai” at 7 ri from each of the four points in the north, south, east, and west around the temple. Shichiri-Kekkai is said to be the range that connects “the border between Kishu and Yamato” in the east, “Kino River,” “Kishi River,” “Hoshi River Bridge” in the north, “Hoshiko River,” “Mount Takatsubo,” “Shichihonmatsu,” “Shigano Village,” “Oishi-mine” in the west, and “Yoko-mine” in the south (Figure 2).<sup>13</sup> Shichiri-Kekkai can be said to be a boundary formed by nature, such as rivers and mountains, as a sacred area for training centered around Mount Koya.

#### 3.1.2. “Female Boundary”

There is a legend that while Ku-Kai was climbing Mount Koya with his mother, it rained lightning and fire, and only his mother was unable to go beyond the “Kesagake-Ishi” and “Oshiage-Ishi.” Thus, there was a boundary at the place where the Kesagake-Ishi

and Oshiage-Ishi were located to prevent women from entering. In folklore, it is said that Japanese boundaries were originally defined by “points.”<sup>14</sup> Boundaries are “places to throw away things that cause harm,” “sacred places to worship gods,” and “places to gain the spiritual power of gods,” but they are also “places where you can be attacked by demonic things.” In the case of Kesagake-Ishi and Oshiage-Ishi, it can be said that the dimensions of the places as boundaries manifested themselves in the rain of thunder and fire.

There is a place called “Kamiya” on Higashi-Koya-Kaido leading to Fudo-Guchi, and this road is also called Kyo-Osaka-michi, and is a convenient way to climb Mount Koya from Kyoto or Osaka, which is much faster than taking Cho-ishi-michi. This road has been used by people since the Heian period. Kamiya was the junction between the road going down Kudoyama Town and the road going down Hashimoto City, and it is said that there was a brothel there. In folklore, a fork in the road is called “Chimata,” which is a boundary area and is also a “place where men and women meet.”<sup>15</sup> Boundaries are also “places where gods appear,” and the place name Kamiya appears to imply its dimension as a boundary.

“Kesagake-Ishi” and “Oshiage-Ishi” are on the way to Daimon-Guchi, similarly “Kamiya-no-Chimata” to Fudo-Guchi, “Kurokawa-Toge” to Kurokawa-Guchi, “Sakura-Toge” to Omine-Guchi, “Susuki-Toge” to Otaki-Guchi, “Kasamatsu-Toge” to Ainoura-Guchi, and “Yukawa-Tsuji” to Ryujin-Guchi. These stones, Chimata, “Toge” (mountain passes), and “Tsuji” (crossroads) are the “point boundaries” on the road to Mount Koya. All these are roughly concentric circles centered on the temple. Furthermore, the Kobo-Daishi Mausoleum, which is discussed later, is located close to this concentric circle. In this study, this concentric boundary is referred as “Female Boundary” (Figure 2).

#### 3.1.3. *Koya-Nana-Kuchi and Nyonin-Michi*

“Koya-Nana-Kuchi” was established from the end of the early to late Edo period. Each of the seven entrances is an entrance to Mount Koya. It comprises seven “Kuchi” (-Guchi) and their names represent the roads or entrances leading to them. At the end of the road from the foot of the mountain to Otaki-Guchi is Rokuro-Toge, and at the end of the road to Daimon-Guchi and Ryujin-Guchi, there is a steep slope. The paths to other “Kuchi” also end at the top or bottom of the slope. Thus, each of Koya-Nana-Kuchi is a “point boundary” represented by a slope that indicates a single place, an entrance.

Cho-Ishi-Michi is the road leading to Daimon-Guchi, which is used by many pilgrims in Nana-Kuchi, and many “sotoba” (Cho-Ishi, grave markers) are built along the way. Pilgrims approach the Gobyō (mausoleum) while worshiping each sotoba individually. The act of walking from the foot of and into the mountain while worshiping sotoba and gradually approaching the sacred place is a “rite of passage at a neutral point,” and the path itself can be described as a boundary as an “empty space.” Therefore, not only is Daimon-Guchi a boundary as an entrance and exit, but the entire Cho-Ishi-Michi leading to it also has the characteristics of a boundary.

Koya-Nana-Kuchi are newly established point boundaries in the Edo period, and is within the area of Shichiri-Kekkai established before then, and is generally inside “Female Boundary.” Ku-Kai, who made Mount Koya as a training place for Shingon Buddhism, was known as “Kobo-Daishi” because he was believed to have abilities that surpassed those of humans and could save all people. Owing to the decline in the power of the Emperor after the Northern and Southern Disturbances, the number of pilgrims visiting Kobo-Daishi’s mausoleum increased as the era changed from prioritizing the sacred things of gods and

emperors to an era emphasizing practicality and economic efficiency; thus, Nana-Kuchi was established.

“Nyonin-Michi” (female road) is a path that connects Nyonin-Do (female hall) and Yama-no-Do in Koya-Nana-Kuchi, along the mountain, and was created in the late Edo period. Women were not allowed to enter the area from the Nyonin-Do. Nyonin-Michi can be said to be a “line boundary” created by connecting Koya-Nana-Kuchi (Figure 2).

Initially, the scope of Nyonin-Michi did not include all current paths, but only the part from Fudo-Saka to Daimon, including Benten-Dake. It is believed that this was connected over time and became the current Nyonin-Michi. The area surrounded by Nyonin-Michi coincides with the precincts of Kongobuji, and along with the area where women are not allowed; this probably indicates the power of Kongobuji as an authoritative temple.

### 3.1.4. Oku-no-In Sacred Area

After Ku-Kai's death, the Gobyō was built on the eastern part of the Mount Koya. There are Ichi-no-Hashi, Naka-no-Hashi, and Gobyō-Bashi leading to the mausoleum, and the area beyond Ichi-

no-Hashi is known as “Oku-no-In sacred area,” which is the sacred area where Kobo-Daishi's Gobyō is located. Each time the bridge is crossed, the holiness gradually increases. The Oku-no-In boundary is represented by bridges. The Oku-no-In sacred area was the most sacred for the people visiting the Mount Koya, and was a place to demonstrate their faith in Kobo-Daishi's divinity and spirituality that transcended human wisdom (Figure 2).

### 3.2. Multilayered Boundaries and Sacred Mountain Kandscape

As sacred boundaries surrounding Mount Koya, Shichiri-Kekkai, “Female Boundary,” and Nyonin-Michi overlap from the outside, and within these is the central temple. Inside these boundaries is the Oku-no-In sacred area, which enshrines the tomb of Kobo-Daishi. The sacred space of Mount Koya and profane spaces at the foot of the mountains do not touch each other; however, there are many boundaries between them. In ancient times, large natural boundaries such as mountains and rivers formed boundaries, and within these boundaries were created natural boundaries such as stones, mountain passes, and crossroads that prohibited entry to the mountains, except for ascetic monks. As time progressed,

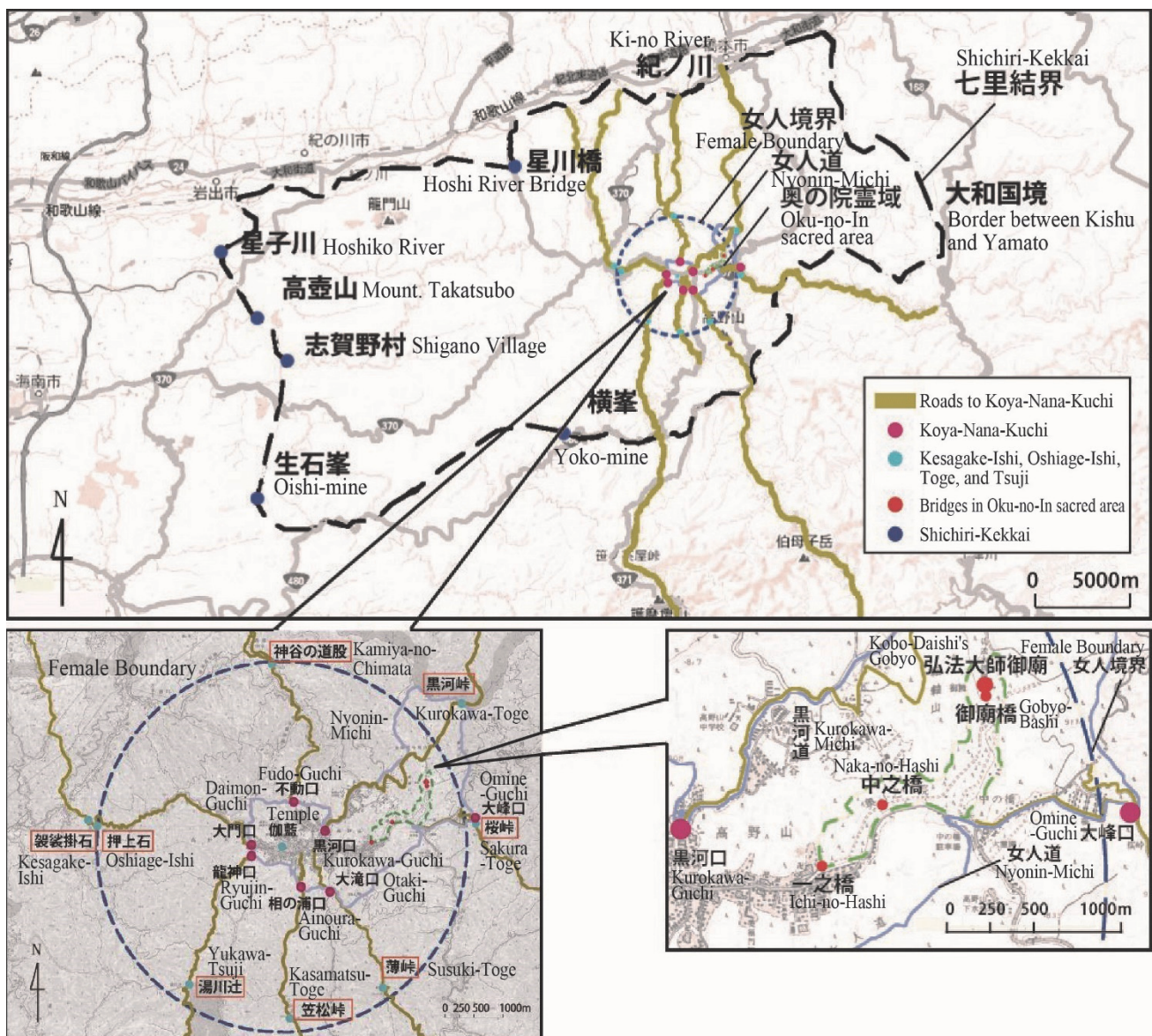


Figure 2. Boundaries in Mount Koya<sup>16</sup>

architecture and roads that connected them emerged, and other boundaries were created. All of these are based on spatial “boundaries of points,” which were connected to become “boundaries of lines” and formed the sacred areas.

There are several roads extending from the foot of the mountain to Mount Koya, connecting the sacred and profane spaces. These roads are a series of “point boundaries,” many sotoba, or stones, Toge, Tsuji, bridges, and temples located at the places where the “line boundaries” intersect with the roads. As people worshiped the point boundaries and passed through them, the sacredness of the Mount Koya increased, which became training and probably led to Kobo-Daishi’s faith. Religious holiness was imparted to nature, and the placement of Kobo Daishi’s tomb solidified this belief, creating a sacred mountain landscape.

#### 4. Inamino Plateau and Mount Mekko<sup>17</sup>

Hyogo Prefecture has approximately 24,000 reservoirs, the largest number in Japan, including Inamino Plateau (east of Kako River in Kakogawa City, Inami Town, Harima Town, parts of Nishi Ward, Kobe City, and west of Akashi River in Akashi City) is home to many reservoirs. This section examines the water system of the Inamino Plateau and describes the mountain landscape of the settlement that was created along with Mount Mekko, the water source, and the reservoir created by the “Ryu” (stream) that flows from there.

##### 4.1. Water System of Inamino Plateau

###### 4.1.1. Settlements with “Ryu” and Reservoirs

As the geological stratum of Inamino Plateau is a gravel layer, most of the rivers are underground water, and are waterless and do not flow as surface water. Additionally, the area has a Seto Inland Sea-type climate with limited annual rainfall, resulting in extremely poor water availability. The Kusatani, Kuniyasu, and Kumo rivers that flow through Inami Town are affected by the Rokko Movements and flow northwestward into the Kako River. Many settlements have been established in this basin since ancient times. According to “Genroku-kuni-Ezu” and “Tenpo-kuni-Ezu,” the roads connecting the settlements around Kusatani River, Kitayama Village, and the settlements around Tenma-Oike are located along the river flowing northwest or north. From the Middle Ages to the Early Modern period, the living spaces of Inami Town expanded along the river that flows to Kako River in the northwest owing to the influence of the Rokko Movements.

Three reservoirs were built before the Middle Ages: Tenma-Oike, Nyu-ga-Ike, and Kyo-no-Ike. Tenma-Oike and Kyo-no-Ike were located near the settlements, while Nyu-ga-Ike was located far from the settlement (Figure 3). Although Nyu-ga-Ike is located far from Kitayama Village, the water that poured into Nyu-ga-Ike flows into Kitayama Village through Kumo River, so there was a deep connection between Nyu-ga-Ike and Kitayama Village. Thus, it is believed that the settlements in this area were established not by geographical distance, but by the water systems that flowed into them. Reservoirs have a deep relationship with the shrines and temples of settlements, and Tenma-Oike is deified and enshrined at the Kuniyasu-Tenma-Shrine as Ike-no-Daimyojin. For the people of settlements established before the Middle Ages, reservoirs were not only functional in that they stored vital water and supported their lives, but were also spiritually important.

Since the Early Modern period, many reservoirs have been built throughout Inami Town as facilities to store water drawn

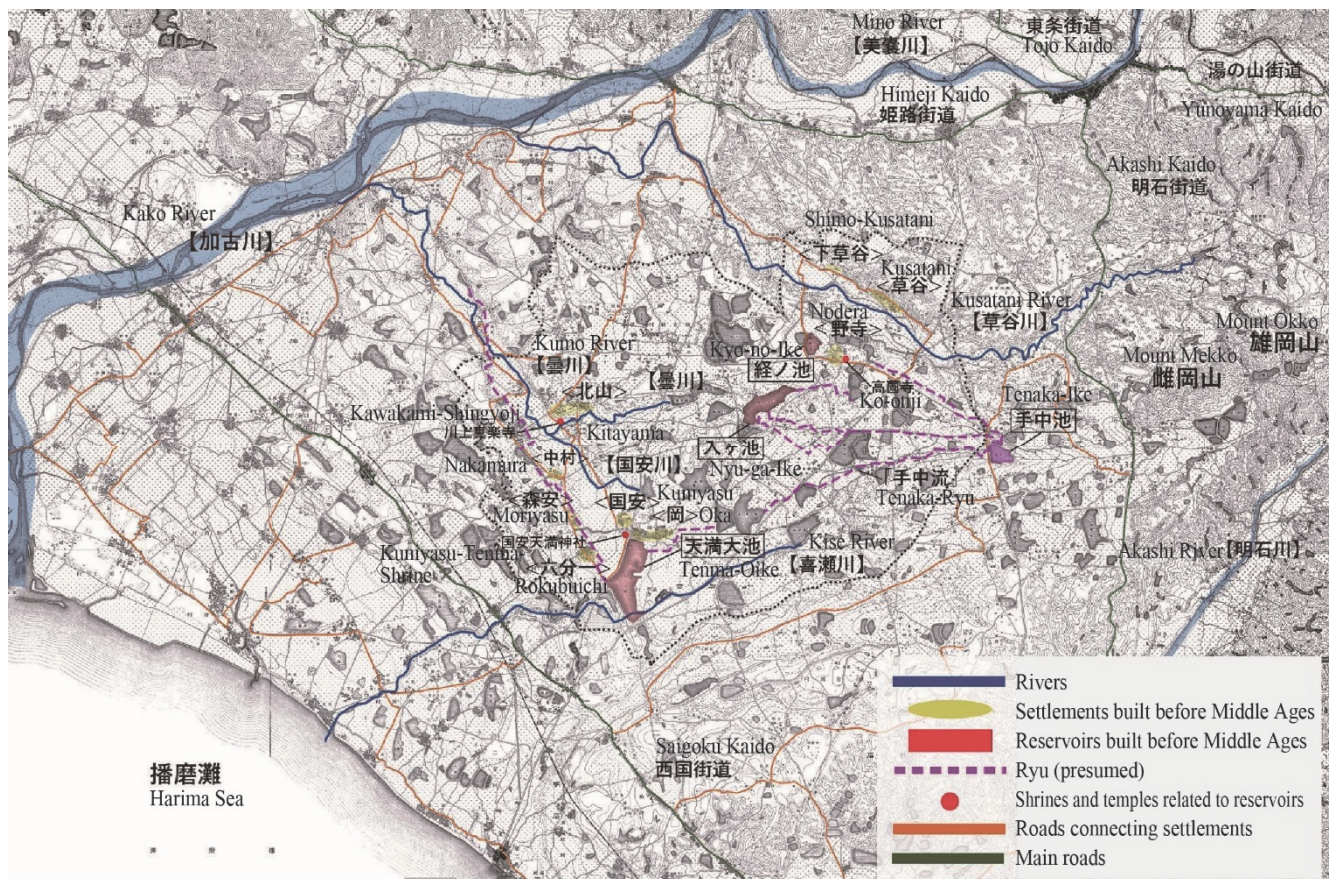


Figure 3. Rivers, settlements, reservoirs, “Ryu,” shrines, temples, roads in Inamino Plateau<sup>19</sup>

from rivers. Consequently, rice paddies increased dramatically, even in settlements on plateaus, where new rice field development lagged. As the number of reservoirs increased and many settlements were established, people's lives and reservoirs became geographically closer, and the reservoirs became playgrounds for children.

In this region, the small rivers used to collect water for reservoirs are called "Ryu." However, with the completion of the Toban Irrigation Water in recent years, pipelines have replaced Ryu, and there are fewer places where Ryu can be seen on the ground. Prior to the Middle Ages, Ryu flowed into the reservoirs, which was an important element in their construction (Figure 3). Ryu flowing into Tenma-Oike was called "Tenaka-Ryu," and it connected from Kamide Town, Kobe City, to Inami Town, and then to Kakogawa City. The five settlements established before the Middle Ages near Tenma-Oike are located along Tenaka-Ryu. Therefore, it is believed that the pre-medieval settlements around Tenma-Oike were built with Tenma-Oike and Tenaka-Ryu flowing through them. "Ryu," unique to this region, was not only a water source for reservoirs before the Middle Ages, but was also an important element in the establishment of settlements.

#### 4.1.2. Mount Mekko as a Water Source

Mount Mekko, located in Kamide Town, Nishi-ku, Kobe City, in the northeastern part of the Inamino Plateau, is the highest mountain in the flat Nishi Ward, Kobe City, at an altitude of 241 meters. It is loved by residents along with Mount Okko to the east. Mount Mekko is said to be the oldest land on the Inamino Plateau, and there are Higashi-Otoshi-Shrine, Higashi-Atago-Shrine, Shiratama-Daimyojin, Raseki-Shrine, Himeishi-Shrine, and Kamide-Shrine at the top of the mountain. Mount Mekko has been worshiped as a mountain where gods have been enshrined since ancient times. There are several myths and legends related to Mount Mekko and Kamide Shrine.<sup>18</sup>

According to a 1764 document, Tenaka-Ryu is water that flows from Mount Mekko, and according to the records in "Suiron," it can be assumed that it was once stored in Tenaka-Ike in Kamide Town, Nishi War, Kobe City, east of Inami Town, and then flows from there. Although the year of construction of Tenaka-Ike is unknown, it can be said that Tenaka-Ike was one of the most important reservoirs in Inamino Plateau. Ryu plays the role of collecting and transporting the water that flows down the Mount Mekko to reservoirs, through reservoirs to settlements, and then to paddy fields that support people's lives; it was an essential road of water for the establishment of settlements. In addition to Tenaka-Ryu, the Kumori River, which currently connects Nyu-ga-Ike and Kitayama villages, probably played the same role as Ryu as water from Mount Mekko used to flow into Kitayama Village via Tenaka-Ike and Nyu-ga-Ike. The source of Ryu that carried the water of life to Inamino Plateau is Mount Mekko, and it is also the source of all rivers that flow through the Inamino Plateau. Thus, the water source of Inamino Plateau was Mount Mekko, before the completion of canals.

#### 4.2. Mountain Landscape in Settlement

On the Inamino Plateau, settlements were established along the river that flowed northwest on the plateau created by the effects of the Rokko Movements. Mount Mekko, which has been a mountain of worship since ancient times, is also the source of water for Inamino Plateau, and the water that flows from there becomes a "Ryu," creating reservoirs and establishing settlements. Since the Early Modern period, many reservoirs have been built, and because of the construction of canals and the development of irrigation water, many Ryu can no longer be seen, however,

Mount Mekko continues to be familiar to people today as the mountain that can be seen from anywhere on the Inamino Plateau. Therefore, Mount Mekko is the landscape as the mountain of faith in the settlements of the Inamino Plateau, the water source, and a beautiful mountain.

#### Conclusion

This study organized the meanings of mountains in Japan by era (Section 1), based on which I described the landscapes of mountains that inherited the Kunihiki myth by examining the changes in the topography of the Izumo Plain, the establishment of ancient roads, and the distribution of shrines (Section 2), the sacred mountain landscape with the multiple boundaries of Mount Koya, including from the outside, Shichiri-Kekkai, "Female Boundary," and Nyonin-Michi with the mausoleum of Kobo-Daishi at their center (Section 3), the landscape as the mountain of faith, the mountain of water source, and the beautiful mountain in Inamino Plateau (Section 4). Mountains in Japan are parts of nature that have inherited myths about the history of topographic changes in ancient times; shrines were built to demonstrate their sacredness, and people worshiped and held festivals at the mountains that could be seen at a distance from settlements at the foot of the mountains. Mountains were themselves objects of worship and were probably important sources of water to support lives in flatland settlements. During the Heian period, with the spread of Buddhism, mountains became places for monk training, and sacred mountains surrounded by multiple overlapping boundaries were created. However, mountains were also places of aspiration that separated the capital's aristocrats from the world. During the Early Modern period, people began to climb mountains in various places, and for Japanese people, mountains became beautiful nature and "landscapes" for people to admire. Mountain landscapes in Japan have ambiguous meanings: they are nature that has inherited myths, sources of water for daily life, and sacred places for training, but they are the most important landscapes for Japanese people, as beautiful nature that has always existed.

#### Endnotes

1. Chapter 1 is rewritten after Sugimoto, 2019.
2. Miyake, 2016.
3. Miyake, 2016.
4. Hishinuma, 1985.
5. Ono, 2011.
6. Higuchi, 1981.
7. Machida, 2003.
8. Chapter 2 is rewritten after Naitou, 2018.
9. Takioto, 2006.
10. Nakamura, 2006.
11. Naitou, 2018
12. Chapter 3 is rewritten after Kanamori, 2013.
13. Gorai, 1976.
14. Orikuchi, 1996.
15. Akasaka, 2002.
16. Kanamori, 2013.
17. Chapter 4 is rewritten after Kishi, 2021.
18. Fujii, 2004.
19. Kishi, 2021.

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