

From Mountain to Monument: Mount Fuji as International Icon

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by

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ABSTRACT

FROM MOUNTAIN TO MONUMENT: MOUNT FUJI AS INTERNATIONAL ICON

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Mount Fuji has long been one of the most recognizable mountains in the world, its image signifying Japan much in the same way that the Taj Mahal signifies India or the Great Wall signifies China. Fuji became an important component of Japanese art, literature, folklore, and religion hundreds (if not thousands) of years before the arrival of the first visitors from the West. It has been said of Fuji that “[n]o peak more beautifully embodies the spirit of a nation,” but what is that spirit, and by what process did this mountain come to embody it?¹ Unlike the Taj Mahal and the Great Wall, both constructed by a specific person or group of people and for a specific purpose, Mount Fuji is a chance feature of the natural landscape. Little about Mount Fuji has actually changed, yet popular perceptions of it have shifted dramatically from its early role as a spiritual realm to its modern function as an emblem of national pride.

¹ Edwin Bernbaum, *Sacred Mountains of the World* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), 61.

This thesis seeks to examine this shift by first giving an overview of the formation of Mount Fuji and the beliefs that arose around it between the eighth and eighteenth centuries. It will demonstrate how factors that arose from Japan's contact with the West, in particular the fear of colonization, caused Mount Fuji to be remade into a symbol of international prestige, while also becoming a marketing tool used to brand certain cultural products as Japanese. Following an analysis of these events, this paper will also explore contemporary attempts to reconcile these competing identities.

INTRODUCTION: A PERFECT SPIRITUAL FORM

In order to understand Mount Fuji's spiritual appeal, one must first understand its origins. Not a true mountain, Mount Fuji is a composite volcano, or stratovolcano, formed by layers of lava and ash that have built up over the millennia to create Fuji's nearly perfect conical shape.² Mount Fuji assumed this shape about 10,000 years ago after two previous volcanoes were subsumed by a third, with the only other significant change to its appearance occurring in 1707 when its most recent eruption formed a crater on its southeastern side.³ Rising to a height of 12,388 feet, Mount Fuji is also Japan's tallest mountain, and for most of its recorded history viewers have seen a constant plume of steam rising from its peak.⁴ As groups of people with various religious beliefs entered the region, they were each struck by Fuji's unique appearance and interacted with it by projecting their previously held beliefs onto the mountain while simultaneously adapting their ideologies to incorporate it, often resulting in Mount Fuji taking a central role in the local practice of these religions.

The first religion to adopt Mount Fuji was Shinto. Although Mount Fuji was already referred to as a "god mysterious" in the eighth-century anthology of poetry called the *Manyōshū*, the earliest record of Mount Fuji's worship dates to the year 806, when a

² H. Byron Earhart, *Mount Fuji: Icon of Japan* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2011), 3.

³ Earhart, *Mount Fuji*, 4. Fuji's initial formation, however, was about 25,000 years ago.

⁴ Henry D. Smith II, *Hokusai: One Hundred Views of Mt. Fuji* (New York: George Braziller, Inc, 1998), 8. Fuji holds this title with a fairly significant lead as it is almost 20% higher than its closest competitors.

local official ordered that a shrine be built near the foot of the mountain to placate its destructive fire deity.⁵ Eventually this fire deity became identified with the Shinto goddess Konohana Sakuya Hime, meaning Goddess of Flowering Trees, in recognition of the mountain's role in providing water for local crops.⁶ In addition to Fuji's life-giving aspects, it was also associated with death and the world of spirits, as corpses were traditionally buried (or abandoned) on mountains to separate them from the spaces and activities of human life on the plains.⁷ Thus, within the practice of Shinto, Mount Fuji had already developed the dual roles of being the home and body of Konohana Sakuya Hime and being a special realm where the dead could either reside or cross the boundary between earth and heaven.⁸ These early Shinto beliefs became so closely tied to Mount Fuji that they continued to have a strong impact on the way people viewed the mountain throughout the rest of its history, including on those viewers who brought other religions with them.

Another early religion to reach Mount Fuji was Taoism, which adapted Fuji's association with death into the belief that a secret source of immortality was hidden somewhere at its peak.⁹ The Chinese *Records of the Grand Historian*, written in the first century BCE, tell the story of the third century BCE emperor Qin Shi Huang sending "a Taoist adept named Hsü Fu (in Japanese, Jofuku) to seek out the Three Mountains of the

⁵ Earhart, *Mount Fuji*, 6; and Edwin Bernbaum, *Sacred Mountains of the World* (Berkeley, CA: Stanford University Press, 1972), 62.

⁶ Bernbaum, *Sacred Mountains*, 56, 62.

⁷ Allan G. Grapard, "Flying Mountains and Walkers of Emptiness: Toward a Definition of Sacred Space in Japanese Religions," *History of Religions* 21, no. 3 (1982): 200.

⁸ Ichiro Hori, "Mountains and Their Importance for the Idea of the Other World in Japanese Folk Religion," *History of Religions* 6, no. 1 (1966): 8. Throughout Japanese history opinion has been split as to which of these interpretations is correct. For example, the *Manyōshū* contains 51 instances in which the soul of the deceased rests on a mountain, and 23 instances in which it rests in the sky or clouds.

⁹ Smith, *One Hundred Views of Mt. Fuji*, 10.

Immortals and bring back the magic elixir” of eternal life.¹⁰ In the Japanese version of the story one of these mountains was Mount Fuji, providing a possible basis for Fuji’s connection to immortality.¹¹ Another possible root of the belief in Mount Fuji as a source of immortality is the ninth-century Japanese story called “The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter,” which tells of a heavenly maiden who came to earth and married an emperor, only to leave him a few years later in order to return to the heavens.¹² To comfort her grief-stricken husband she left behind “a jar containing the elixir of immortality,” but this was of little consolation to the emperor who ordered that the elixir be tossed into the flames at the top of Mount Fuji.¹³ Whatever its origin, the Taoist belief that Mount Fuji held the secret to eternal life became so common that the name Fuji was commonly spelled using two characters that translate to “not-death.”¹⁴

The last major religion to enter Japan during the medieval period was Buddhism. While Buddhism had begun to gain popularity in the court soon after its introduction in the sixth century, it was not until the ninth century that Buddhist beliefs and practices began to spread to the common people.¹⁵ In 804 the court sent two monks to China to bring back ‘authentic’ Buddhism, and both established monasteries on mountains in Japan when they returned.¹⁶ One of these monks, Kōbō Daishi, stated that, according to

¹⁰ Smith, *One Hundred Views of Mt. Fuji*, 11.

¹¹ Smith, *One Hundred Views of Mt. Fuji*, 11.

¹² Smith, *One Hundred Views of Mt. Fuji*, 10.

¹³ Smith, *One Hundred Views of Mt. Fuji*, 10.

¹⁴ Melinda Takeuchi, “Making Mountains: Mini-Fujis, Edo Popular Religion and Hiroshige’s One Hundred Famous Views of Edo,” *Impressions: Official Publication of the Ukiyo-e Society of America* 24 (2002): 29.

¹⁵ Earhart, *Mount Fuji*, 22-23.

¹⁶ Earhart, *Mount Fuji*, 23.

the sutra, meditation should be practiced on a flat area deep in the mountains, and his practice introduced a series of changes to the ways sacred mountains functioned:

First, the mountain is valued not so much for its intrinsic power (in the case of Fuji, the power of fire and water) as for its suitability as a site for the practice of Buddhism (a place of retreat from society and the world). Second, the mountain was not worshipped from below (from afar, at the foot, or on the lower slopes) but was climbed as a religious practice, and buildings and rites were located on the mountainside or even on the summit. Third, the goal of such rites placed less emphasis on seasonal and local community celebrations, instead stressing personal practice and national/cosmic realization.¹⁷

Several centuries later, Buddhist practices were blended together with elements of Taoism and Shinto into a new religion that became known as Shugendo.¹⁸ Some time before the 12th century Buddhist priests had linked Mount Fuji's Shinto deity Konohana Sakuya Hime with the Buddha of Essence, Dainichi, and during the 12th century a priest named Matsudai Shonin climbed the mountain in order to construct a temple to this Buddha at Fuji's summit, marking the first recorded ascent of Mount Fuji and paving the way for future climbers.¹⁹ Initially, only Shugendo priests were allowed to climb Mount Fuji, but during the Kamakura period (1185-1333) the practice opened up to all believers.²⁰

In their adoption of Shinto beliefs, Shugendo followers saw mountains as a place where the human and spirit worlds intersected, or sometimes as places that belonged entirely to the supernatural world. Therefore, by climbing Mount Fuji and entering this spiritually-charged space Shugendo practitioners could acquire spiritual power that was

¹⁷ Earhart, *Mount Fuji*, 23.

¹⁸ Hori, "Mountains and Their Importance," 2.

¹⁹ Takeuchi, "Making Mountains," 30; and Bernbaum, *Sacred Mountains*, 64.

²⁰ Earhart, *Mount Fuji*, 28.

further cultivated through ascetic practices.²¹ This power was then used to perform various rituals, such as divination and exorcism, catered to the everyday needs of the local populace not filled by the local temple or shrine.²² The notion of Mount Fuji as the dwelling-place of the dead also gave rise to the idea of its being a place for spiritual rebirth, and Shugendo pilgrims began enacting a ritual of death and rebirth by ascending the mountain while mimicking the appearance of a corpse by wearing white clothing and leaving their hair unbound.²³ By the 14th century these pilgrimages had grown popular enough for the Shugendo practitioners to establish a climbing route that led up Mount Fuji's southern flank, and by the 15th century they began constructing huts along the route to aid those making the climb.²⁴

During the 16th century, a Shugendo follower established a new cult that elevated Mount Fuji's deity to the status of "supreme god, creator and sustainer of all things," and further contradicted previous doctrines by preaching that all paradises were located on Mount Fuji's summit instead of the paradise of a particular buddha.²⁵ This new cult, which would later manifest itself in small societies called Fuji-kō, was founded by a young ascetic named Kakugyō after he had a vision in which En no Gyoja, a somewhat legendary figure thought to be Shugendo's originator, commanded him to go to Mount Fuji.²⁶ Kakugyō did as he was told and for the rest of his life he lived in the Hitoana cave

²¹ Hitoshi Miyake, "Religious Rituals in Shugendo: A Summary," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 16, no. 2/3 (1989): 114.

²² Miyake, "Religious Rituals in Shugendo," 101-102.

²³ Takeuchi, "Making Mountains," 29.

²⁴ Bernbaum, *Sacred Mountains*, 64.

²⁵ Bernbaum, *Sacred Mountains*, 64; and Royall Tyler, "A Glimpse of Mt. Fuji in Legend and Cult," *The Journal of the Association of Teachers of Japanese* 16, no. 2 (1981): 147.

²⁶ Tyler, "A Glimpse of Mt. Fuji," 153.

at Fuji's base, practicing austerities and preaching about a new vision of the world which he claimed was revealed to him by Mount Fuji herself, the "living mountain which is the One God."²⁷ Kakugyō's new Fuji cult was therefore the first to feature Mount Fuji as its central deity, and would eventually grow to have many variations on its practice.

Perhaps due in part to his somewhat radical methods, Kakugyō attracted only a very small number of followers during his lifetime, and it was not until nearly one hundred years after his death that the Fuji cult began to take hold.²⁸ The man responsible for popularizing the Fuji cult was its sixth leader, Jikigyō Miroku.²⁹ Jikigyō believed that the deity of Mount Fuji had entered his body and that by sacrificing himself he could therefore bring about a renewal of the world and end the recurring famines of his time, and so in 1733 he climbed the mountain and put up a small shrine near the seventh station on the north route, then fasted inside it until he died 31 days later.³⁰ Jikigyō's death "electrified the Fuji devotees, and the cult grew rapidly from then on," becoming especially popular in Edo (now Tokyo).³¹

As stories of Jikigyō's self-sacrifice spread and more people were converted to the Fuji faith, followers began forming themselves into mutual assistance groups, called Fuji-kō, and by the 1830s there were over 400 of these groups in Edo alone.³² One of the benefits of joining these groups was that members agreed to pool their resources in order

²⁷ Tyler, "A Glimpse of Mt. Fuji," 153-155. These austerities included Kakugyō's special practice of combining cold water ablutions with standing motionless on a small block of wood for many hours at a time; a practice which he believed made him the heart of Fuji (which was itself the heart of the universe).

²⁸ Tyler, "A Glimpse of Mt. Fuji," 153. One of these followers, however, was purportedly the powerful Tokugawa Ieyasu, who visited Kakugyō at Hitoana on three occasions.

²⁹ Takeuchi, "Making Mountains," 31.

³⁰ Tyler, "A Glimpse of Mt. Fuji," 156-157.

³¹ Tyler, "A Glimpse of Mt. Fuji," 157.

³² Takeuchi, "Making Mountains," 31; and Tyler, "A Glimpse of Mt. Fuji," 157.

to ensure that all able-bodied participants were able to make the pilgrimage to Mount Fuji.³³ This pilgrimage was carried out in much the same way as its Shugendo predecessor, with the main change in this practice being that Jikigyō had suggested constructing Fuji replicas in urban areas that would have a similar spiritual benefit for those unable to travel to the actual mountain.³⁴

Religion and Early Depictions of Mount Fuji

Although few images of Mount Fuji from before the 14th century survive, the oldest extant depiction of Mount Fuji dates from 1069, appearing on an illustrated narrative scroll (or *emaki*) which tells the story of the prince Shōtoku Taishi (CE 574-622).³⁵ A greater volume of works showing Mount Fuji survive from the Muromachi period (1333-1568), “when Mount Fuji was usually depicted with a completely white top and a three peaked crown” (Figure 1).³⁶ This highly stylized way of showing Mount Fuji may have been a way of symbolically referring to the mountain, which was known as *sanpōkei*, meaning the three peaks.³⁷ The prevalence of the three-peaked Fuji probably also connects to popular Buddhist ideas emphasizing the number three- the three forces of nature (heaven, earth, and man), the three countries (China, Japan, and India), the three states of existence (past, present, and future), and the three refuges (the Buddha, the samgha, and the dharma) - all of which could have been represented by the three peaks

³³ Takeuchi, “Making Mountains,” 31.

³⁴ Takeuchi, “Making Mountains,” 31.

³⁵ Chris Uhlenbeck and Merel Molenaar, *Mount Fuji: Sacred Mountain of Japan* (Leiden: Hotei Publishing, 2000), 15.

³⁶ Uhlenbeck and Molenaar, *Mount Fuji*, 15.

³⁷ Uhlenbeck and Molenaar, *Mount Fuji*, 15.

atop Mount Fuji.³⁸ This way of representing Fuji remained popular well into the Edo period. In the fifteenth century, Fuji became the subject of mandalas, Buddhist images meant to aid in meditation by helping to focus one's thoughts.³⁹ The vertical organization of Kanō Motonobu's *Mandala of a Pilgrimage to Mount Fuji* (Figure 2) represents the pilgrimage to Mount Fuji as a process of spiritual ascent, where each stage of the journey to Fuji's peak brings the pilgrim to a greater level of spiritual understanding.⁴⁰



Fig. 1. *Landscape with Mount Fuji*, ca. 1573-1615. Ink on paper, 9 1/16 x 23 13/16 inches. The Freer Gallery of Art.



Fig. 2. Kanō Motonobu, *Mandala of a Pilgrimage to Mount Fuji* (*Fuji sankei mandara*), ca. 1476-1559. Color on silk, 73 1/2 x 46 1/2 inches. Fujisan Hongū Sengen Jinja.

³⁸ Uhlenbeck and Molenaar, *Mount Fuji*, 15.

³⁹ Laura Nenz Detto Nenzi, *Excursions in Identity: Travel and the Intersection of Place, Gender, and Status in Edo Japan* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2008), 27.

⁴⁰ Nenzi, *Excursions in Identity*, 27. Nenzi also suggests that the inclusion of bridges, boats, and gates is meant to evoke the idea of passing into another world or spiritual realm, while the waterfalls, rivers, and pools evoke purification.

BECOMING A NATIONAL LANDMARK: EDO-PERIOD TOURISM AND THE SPREAD OF MOUNT FUJI BY PRINTS

The event that was to have the single greatest impact on Mount Fuji's development into a cultural icon was the establishment of the Tokugawa shogunate in 1600. After the remaining forces loyal to Toyotomi Hideyori, successor to Toyotomi Hideyoshi, were defeated at the siege of Osaka Castle, Tokugawa Ieyasu had complete control over Japan and he and his successors began a series of administrative changes that lasted until 1868.⁴¹ Ieyasu selected Edo (now Tokyo) as the headquarters of the Tokugawa shogunate in 1603, and thus the period from that point until the Meiji Restoration is commonly referred to both as the Tokugawa and the Edo period.

The administrative policy of the Tokugawa that most directly influenced the cultural history of Mount Fuji was the system known as 'alternate attendance.' Established in 1634, "it required all the nation's feudal lords to maintain large, lavishly decorated establishments in Edo where they could alternate periods in attendance to the shogun and where their families would remain as hostages when they returned to their fiefs."⁴² In order to facilitate travel by feudal lords and their retinues so they could comply with the alternate attendance policy, the Tokugawa government built up a vast network of highways and waterways that connected Edo with the major cities of Kyoto

⁴¹ Christine Guth, *Art of Edo Japan: The Artist and the City 1615-1868* (New York: Henry N. Abrams, Inc, 1996), 9.

⁴² Guth, *Art of Edo Japan*, 14.

and Osaka, as well as many provincial towns and ports.⁴³ By the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the movement of daimyo and their vassals along these routes was accompanied by large numbers of “merchants, peddlers, pilgrims, and pleasure-seekers,” and this movement contributed to the development of an increasingly integrated national culture that existed alongside Japan’s distinct regional cultures.⁴⁴ Included among the travelers on these roads were the urban artists of the Edo period, who “made journeys of personal discovery by visiting famous holy spots, by retracing the steps of a famous poet or religious leader, or simply by contemplating the beauties of the natural world.”⁴⁵ As one of the most prominent landmarks seen in the capital city and along the Tokaido, the famous road that linked Edo with Kyoto, Mount Fuji was quickly absorbed into the new tourist culture, although it was not until the middle of the nineteenth century that images of Fuji would begin to be commoditized in the form of woodblock prints.

The first industry to capitalize on the emerging tourism culture was the field of literature and publishing. Travel along the Tokaido had become so frequent by the mid-seventeenth century that a picture map of the route was published in 1646, and Asai Ryô’s *A Record of Famous Places on the Tôkaidô* was published in 1658.⁴⁶ In *A Record of Famous Places* Ryô refers to the Tokaido as a *meisho*, a term designating a place of

⁴³ Guth, *Art of Edo Japan*, 14. In addition to the construction of these routes, the alternate attendance policy also helped to make Edo the world’s largest city, with over a million inhabitants by the beginning of the eighteenth century, as well as leading to the rise of the culture of pleasure quarters for the daimyo’s retinues which would become one of the most popular subjects of Ukiyo-e prints.

⁴⁴ Guth, *Art of Edo Japan*, 14.

⁴⁵ Guth, *Art of Edo Japan*, 18.

⁴⁶ James King, *Beyond the Great Wave: The Japanese Landscape Print, 1727-1960* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), 64. Around this time compact guidebooks were also becoming available, and by the late eighteenth century consumers could purchase large-format illustrated guidebooks with both aerial and street-level views of the Tokaido’s sights.

significant interest (or one containing places of significant interest).⁴⁷ A fictionalized counterpart to *A Record of Famous Places* was published in 1661 under the title *An Account of Famous Places of the Tokaido*; this narrative juxtaposes a worldly priest with a naïve commoner and tells of their experiences traveling the Tokaido together.⁴⁸

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, nationwide travel for both business and pleasure had become a common activity among all classes. Pilgrimages to temples, shrines, and scenic sites in the countryside were popular, but the great Eastern Capital, as Edo was often known, was also a favorite destination.⁴⁹ By 1800 there existed what was referred to as ‘Hakkei culture,’ meaning a large number of people who were “so extremely desirous of travelling that they met in groups to talk about their obsession.”⁵⁰ These people were avid consumers of the variety of guidebooks and travel literature that was available, and would soon prove to be a rapt audience for a new genre of woodblock prints showing views of famous places throughout Japan.⁵¹

The print by Isoda Koryusai, titled *Dreaming of Walking near Fuji* (Figure 3), illustrates simultaneously the Hakkei obsession with travel and a folk belief that seems to have appeared a few decades earlier: that at the beginning of the New Year, dreaming of Fuji, an eggplant, and a falcon would bring good luck to the dreamer.⁵² Around the same time as the emergence of Hakkei culture, ukiyo-e prints, images of the idealized ‘floating world’ of Edo’s brothels and theater districts, were increasingly marketed as inexpensive

⁴⁷ King, *Beyond the Great Wave*, 64.

⁴⁸ King, *Beyond the Great Wave*, 64.

⁴⁹ Guth, *Art of Edo Japan*, 112.

⁵⁰ King, *Beyond the Great Wave*, 64.

⁵¹ King, *Beyond the Great Wave*, 64.

⁵² King, *Beyond the Great Wave*, 39.

souvenirs of a visit to the capital.⁵³ These prints had long been considered one of Edo's distinctive products, but it would take several decades before publishers realized the commercial potential of prints that actually depicted the views tourists saw as they were approaching and exploring Edo.⁵⁴



Fig. 3. Isoda Koryusai. *Dreaming of Walking near Fuji*, ca. 1770-1773. Polychrome woodblock print, 7 1/2 x 10 in. The Freer Gallery of Art.

Katsushika Hokusai: Opening the Market for Landscape Prints

Landscapes were traditionally viewed as the dominion of painters in the Chinese style, and were thus largely absent from ukiyo-e until the 1830s.⁵⁵ Until then, the two genres that predominated in woodblock prints were pictures of actors (*yakusha-e*) and pictures of courtesans and beautiful women (*bijinga*), with erotic pictures (*shunga*) being

⁵³ Guth, *Art of Edo Japan*, 112. To aid in the marketing of woodblock prints as souvenirs, many publishing houses either opened branches or relocated their shops from the business district of Nihonbashi to the outskirts of the city, where tourists would pass by the shops on their way into or out of Edo.

⁵⁴ Guth, *Art of Edo Japan*, 112.

⁵⁵ King, *Beyond the Great Wave*, 39. Landscape paintings also mimicked Chinese landscape paintings in that they purportedly depicted the Chinese countryside.

the third most common genre.⁵⁶ Although landscape prints were not as popular, they had longer-lasting appeal in comparison to images of local women and actors, whose public fame might last only a few months, so they were a commodity that sold slowly but steadily.⁵⁷ James King has suggested that publishers probably issued landscape prints “in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries not for quick profit but because they wanted to have a variety of wares on offer,” and because “sheet prints of warriors and landscapes may have assisted in giving a veneer of respectability to the Ukiyo-e publishers.”⁵⁸ Landscapes could also be found in illustrated books, for such purposes as to help prepare travelers for what they would encounter on the road or to serve as a backdrop for the actions of a fictional hero.⁵⁹

Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849) was the first artist to use single-sheet landscape prints as a means of capitalizing on the growth of tourism in Edo (as opposed to designing illustrations for guidebooks).⁶⁰ By the beginning of the nineteenth century Hokusai had published a set of *The Fifty-Three Stations of the Tôkaidô*, as well as set of views of both Edo and Ômi province.⁶¹ The former two of these series had shown Mount Fuji as a feature in various views, but Hokusai would not take the peak as his main subject until roughly 1830.⁶² The reason for this is likely that prior to 1829, the two main types of blue pigment available for Japanese artists were not sufficiently vivid to render

⁵⁶ King, *Beyond the Great Wave*, 39.

⁵⁷ King, *Beyond the Great Wave*, 39.

⁵⁸ King, *Beyond the Great Wave*, 40.

⁵⁹ King, *Beyond the Great Wave*, 40.

⁶⁰ King, *Beyond the Great Wave*, 64-65.

⁶¹ King, *Beyond the Great Wave*, 65. It should be noted that Hokusai never travelled very far outside of Edo and would have based most of his designs for these series on the designs in illustrated guidebooks.

⁶² King, *Beyond the Great Wave*, 70-71.

the critical landscape elements of sky and water in the vivid colors characteristic of Ukiyo-e prints.⁶³ In 1829, however, the far more vibrant imported pigment known as Prussian blue had finally become available “at a price that made it[s] use viable commercially for sheet prints,” and Hokusai soon received a commission from the publisher Eijudô for a series that would be titled *Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji*.⁶⁴ This argument for the role of Prussian blue in the genesis of the *Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji* is also supported by the publisher’s printed advertisement for the first set of five in the series, which states that the pictures were all “printed in blue.”⁶⁵ Furthermore, Eijudô’s family was actively involved in the Fuji-ko, which had perhaps given Eijudo the idea that the availability of Prussian blue presented an opportunity to open a new market niche for prints of Mount Fuji in Edo.⁶⁶

It is undeniable that Hokusai’s use of the pigment is what makes many of the most popular images in the series so striking, including his famous *Great Wave off Kanagawa* (Figure 4). The completed series, with 46 views total, showed Fuji in a variety of contexts; including Mount Fuji within the natural world, as “a location that was part of the everyday world of many Edoites,” and as a landmark on the Tokaido- contexts that would appeal to members of the Fuji-ko as well as to the tourist market.⁶⁷ It is therefore of little surprise that the series was a huge commercial success despite the normally small market for landscape prints. The popularity of Katsushika Hokusai’s

⁶³ King, *Beyond the Great Wave*, 70-71.

⁶⁴ King, *Beyond the Great Wave*, 70-71.

⁶⁵ King, *Beyond the Great Wave*, 71-72. It has also been speculated by Henry Smith that the first five designs may have been done only in blue.

⁶⁶ King, *Beyond the Great Wave*, 75.

⁶⁷ King, *Beyond the Great Wave*, 75-76.

Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji, as well as his frequent inclusion of the peak in many of his views of Edo, “contributed to the popular perception that this sacred mountain was integral to Edo’s identity.”⁶⁸



Fig. 4. Katsushika Hokusai. *Great Wave off Kanagawa*, from *Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji*, ca. 1830-1832. Polychrome woodblock print, 10 1/8 x 14 15/16 inches. Musée Guimet.

As Japan entered the nineteenth century, Fuji-kō, Shugendo, Taoism, and Shinto all continued to actively shape the way people throughout the country perceived Mount Fuji. The influence of these various traditions can be seen in Hokusai’s work, particularly in his *One Hundred Views of Mount Fuji*, published as a set of books in the 1830s. Hokusai himself is believed to have either subscribed to the Taoist notion of Fuji as the source of immortal life or been a member of the Fuji-ko (or perhaps both), and his creation of the series is often interpreted as being “in the deepest sense a prayer for the

⁶⁸ Guth, *Art of Edo Japan*, 114.

gift of immortality that lay hidden within the heart of the volcano.”⁶⁹ His *One Hundred Views*, however, contains images pertaining to many of the various Fuji practices, including a depiction of Fuji’s Shinto Konohana Sakuya Hime, Shugendo’s legendary founder En no Gyoja, and many showing pilgrims engaging in a variety of practices associated with different cults. The 73rd print in the series, titled *Fuji from Orankai* (Figure 5), is also notable as a glimpse of Mount Fuji’s future role as an emblem of the Japanese nation, as the print illustrates a rumor that Mount Fuji could be seen from as far away locations on the Asian mainland.⁷⁰ The word ‘Orankai’ was written with characters that could have referred to either an area in Eastern Mongolia or simply any distant and isolated place, and the figures are shown in what appears to be Chinese dress.⁷¹ Hokusai’s intention is clearly to demonstrate that even the working-class foreigner was awed by Mount Fuji’s impressive form.

⁶⁹ Smith, *One Hundred Views of Mt. Fuji*, 7; King, *Beyond the Great Wave*, 75. The scholar Kanô Hiroyuki has pointed out that in a letter from 1837 Hokusai signed his name as Tsuchimochi, meaning ‘earth carrier,’ which was a term used to refer to those who carried the earth to build the mini-Fujis.

⁷⁰ Smith, *One Hundred Views of Mt. Fuji*, 215.

⁷¹ Smith, *One Hundred Views of Mt. Fuji*, 215.

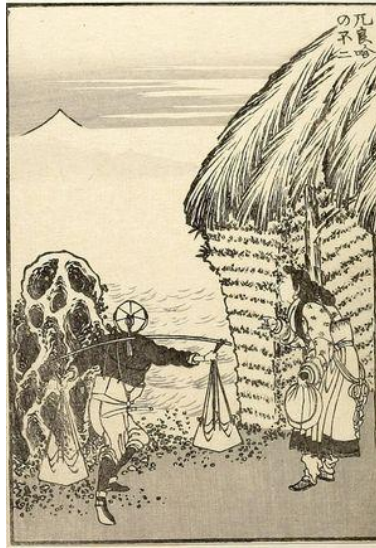


Fig. 5. Katsushika Hokusai. *Fuji from Orankai*, from *One Hundred Views of Mount Fuji*, ca. 1834. Woodblock print, 9 x 6 in.

Hiroshige Captures the Tourist Market

Once Hokusai had opened the market for landscape prints they became especially popular souvenirs, and the genre was thereafter intricately tied to the culture of tourism.⁷² For the first several years after Hokusai began publishing the *Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji*, he and his younger contemporary Utagawa Hiroshige (1797-1858) dominated the new landscape market.⁷³ Hokusai and Hiroshige were, however, very different types of landscape artists. Hokusai's work tends to follow the Chinese tradition of rearranging the landscape to suggest a symbolic meaning and emphasizes Mount Fuji's spiritual power and its presence in all aspects of life in Edo. Hiroshige is a far more literal and secular artist. He resists the symbolic and "places great reliance on his strong powers of

⁷² King, *Beyond the Great Wave*, 2.

⁷³ King, *Beyond the Great Wave*, 88.

observation.”⁷⁴ Hiroshige is wholly focused on the idea as travel as a form of leisure, rather than Hokusai’s notion of travel as an act of spiritual devotion. Hiroshige’s prints, more decidedly than Hokusai’s, “are souvenirs (*miyage*) of travels taken – or they could be viewed as images that prepare travelers for the wonders they will behold, or as significant objects for those who wanted to visit the famous spots but could not.”⁷⁵ As part of a family of low-ranking samurai, Hiroshige had traveled the Tokaido as a member of a daimyo’s retinue a year before he began issuing his celebrated *Fifty-three Stations on the Tōkaidō* in 1833, relying on his own sketches rather than on those in guidebooks.⁷⁶ He later wrote of his work that “[a]ll I have done is to tidy up the large number of sketches of what I saw before my eyes. . . . Nevertheless, my notations are completely true records of the landscape.”⁷⁷

Although Hiroshige was not as concerned with Mount Fuji’s spiritual presence as Hokusai, Hiroshige was intimately familiar with the ways Mount Fuji functioned in the leisure culture Edo’s urban environment and captured this relationship in his depictions of the city. He was also alive during the years that Fuji-ko reached its peak. It had become so popular by the early nineteenth century that more than a hundred miniature replicas of the mountain were constructed throughout Japan, many of which were located in Hiroshige’s hometown.⁷⁸ In looking at the treatment of these Fuji mounds in two of Hiroshige’s prints (Figures 6 and 7) from the *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo* series, published in 1857, evidence can be found of a shift in attitudes toward Mount Fuji:

⁷⁴ King, *Beyond the Great Wave*, 88.

⁷⁵ King, *Beyond the Great Wave*, 96.

⁷⁶ Guth, *Art of Edo Japan*, 115.

⁷⁷ King, *Beyond the Great Wave*, 101.

⁷⁸ Takeuchi, “Making Mountains,” 25.

Hiroshige's climbers appear to be in what might be called 'recreation mode': tea stalls and benches refresh these urban pilgrims- men, women and children- who seem to have come more for an outing under the beautiful spring cherry trees than for the religious experience of ascending the proxy of a sacred mountain. No one wears the white pilgrims' clothing normally donned by the supplicants who climbed Japan's holy mountains and besides, the season is wrong for the ritual ascent. Furthermore, women and children were banned from the male-dominated space at the summit of the Suruga Fuji, whereas Hiroshige's images make quite clear that this proscription did not apply to the Mini-Fujis [to use Henry Smith's term].⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Takeuchi, "Making Mountains," 25.



Fig. 6. Utagawa Hiroshige. *New Fuji, Meguro*, from *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo*, 1857. Polychrome woodblock print, 14 3/16 x 9 1/4 inches. The Brooklyn Museum.



Fig. 7. Utagawa Hiroshige. *Original Fuji, Meguro*, from *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo*, 1857. Polychrome woodblock print, 14 3/16 x 9 1/4 inches. The Brooklyn Museum.

A further point can be made of the fact that the mini-Fuji depicted in *New Fuji, Meguro* was the site “of a scandal only seven years after its founding, when [its founder] Kondō Jūzō’s son killed a neighboring farmer and his family in a dispute over the right to sell souvenirs to mini-Fuji visitors.”⁸⁰ The incident suggests that the mini-Fujis had a large number of visitors who were more interested in their value as intriguing scenic places than their value as places for spiritual renewal. Given that this incident occurred in 1826, 47 years after the first mini-Fuji was built, it is clear that the presence of these mini-Fujis had begun to allow for the mixture of religious activities with secular recreation, although

⁸⁰ Henry D. Smith II, *Hiroshige: One Hundred Famous Views of Edo* (New York: George Brazillier, Inc, 1986), 66.

this mixture did not reach the territory of Mount Fuji itself until a few years after the series was published.⁸¹

In looking at Hiroshige's *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo* one may also get a sense of how Mount Fuji functioned as a cultural object. Mount Fuji appears in eighteen of the total 118 *Views* in Hiroshige's series, and in most of these images it looms in the background as a pictorial device to balance out a large object in the foreground. From these images one could surmise that Hiroshige and his Edo audience viewed Mount Fuji simply as one of Edo's many famous landmarks, one that commonly served as a means of orientation rather than as an object of reverence. Additionally, there are another eighteen plates in the series showing different mountains, twelve showing Mount Tsukuba and six showing the Nikkō Range, which supports the notion of the mountains' function as geographic markers.

However, a closer inspection of these plates may serve to complicate this interpretation of the relationship between Mount Fuji and Edo. In comparing the appearance of Hiroshige's mountains, his depictions of Mount Fuji are very nearly identical, particularly in the peaks visible on the summit, while his depictions of Mount Tsukuba and the Nikkō Range tend to vary. Even in the images where Mount Fuji occupies only a small space in the background, Hiroshige is careful to show four distinct ridges at its peak, and makes note of the differences in slope between its northwestern (on the right) and southeastern (left) sides. Closer views also reveal the contour of the crater on its southeastern side. On the other hand, Mount Tsukuba, while easily recognized by

⁸¹ Smith, *Hiroshige*, 66. The first Mount Fuji replica was constructed in 1779 in Takata; the one pictured in *New Fuji*, *Meguro* was constructed in 1819.

its twin peaks, lacks the same careful definition in its slopes; the Nikkō Range is the most variable of these mountains, with an inconsistent number of slopes between images, although this is most likely because it was the farthest from Edo and therefore the hardest to see.⁸²

The amount of detail in Hiroshige's depictions of Mount Fuji indicates that his audience would have expected a high level of veracity to satisfy their own familiarity with the nuances of Fuji's form. This familiarity, in turn, serves as evidence of the importance of viewing and contemplating Mount Fuji in Edo culture. Looking again at *New Fuji, Meguro* and *Original Fuji, Meguro*, one may note how the figures ascending the mini-Fujis gesture towards the real Fuji in the distance, and appear to have undertaken the climb as a means of viewing the mountain rather than as an activity in and of itself. The groups of figures in *Grandpa's Teahouse, Meguro* (Figure 8) and *View of Kōnodai and the Tone River* (Figure 9) demonstrate a similar preoccupation with observing Mount Fuji, and give the impression that they are engaging each other in conversation about the sacred mountain.

⁸² Smith, *Hiroshige*, 48. Hiroshige likely never traveled far enough out of Edo to be able to observe the Nikkō Range, and seems to have been "rather vague about the details of this distant silhouette." However, we may assume that his viewers, having an equally vague impression of the mountain range, would have found this entirely unproblematic.



Fig. 8. Utagawa Hiroshige. *Grandpa's Teahouse, Meguro*, from *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo*, 1857. Polychrome woodblock print, 14 3/16 x 9 1/4 inches. The Brooklyn Museum.



Fig. 9. Utagawa Hiroshige. *View of Kōnodai and the Tone River*, from *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo*, 1857. Polychrome woodblock print, 14 3/16 x 9 1/4 inches. The Brooklyn Museum.

A final example of the popularity of viewing Mount Fuji in the *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo* is *Suruga-chō* (Figure 10). *Suruga-chō*, the street depicted in this print, was so famous for its view of Mount Fuji that its very name was derived from this view, as Fuji's summit lay on the edge of the territory then known as Suruga Province (today Shizuoka Prefecture).⁸³ The street's perfect orientation toward the mountain made *Suruga-chō*'s vantage point an "Edo tradition" that was a popular subject in printed views of the city.⁸⁴ In contrast to the images later in the series which focus on the figures viewing Mount Fuji, in *Suruga-chō* Hiroshige places the audience directly in the position

⁸³ Smith, *Hiroshige*, 32. It should be noted here that the matter of which territory Mount Fuji's peak belongs to has always been unclear and continues to remain so today. This issue will be discussed later on.

⁸⁴ Smith, *Hiroshige*, 32. The orientation of *Suruga-chō* and several other nearby streets has led the architectural historian Kirishiki Shinjirō to propose that they were consciously designed this way in the original plan of Edo.

of the viewer, thereby attempting to replicate the experience of physically standing at the top of the street and gazing upon the mountain. A wall of clouds aids our contemplation by creating a barrier between the mountain and the busy street scene below and providing a symbolic separation between the sacred realm of Mount Fuji and the profane mortal world.



Fig. 10. Utagawa Hiroshige. *Surugachō*, from *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo*, 1857. Polychrome woodblock print, 14 3/16 x 9 1/8 inches. The Brooklyn Museum.

A conclusion to be drawn from comparing Hokusai's *One Hundred Views of Mount Fuji* to Hiroshige's *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo* is that as late as 1857 Mount Fuji still functioned primarily as the anchoring of several religious traditions, but that distant urban viewers were also beginning to perceive it from the point of view of recreational and aesthetic enjoyment. Although Fuji received regular visitors during this

time, these visitors were solely religious pilgrims who were willing to face Mount Fuji's adverse climbing conditions and potentially lose their lives in pursuit of spiritual power and renewal.⁸⁵ Hokusai and Hiroshige's prints suggest that viewing, as opposed to climbing, was the dominant means by which the average person interacted with Japan's famous mountain. However, these attitudes and customs would undergo a rapid change within just a few decades of the *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo*, caused by Japan's rapid adaptations following its increased contact with the West. The Japanese response to its interactions with the West eventually resulted in the reshaping of Mount Fuji's role in Japanese culture, while becoming an important symbol of the country for international audiences.

⁸⁵ Bernbaum, *Sacred Mountains*, 64. It was not uncommon for pilgrims to die during their ascent, and a record from the sixteenth century tells of the casualties to one such unfortunate party: "thirteen persons met their deaths at the summit during a storm and a bear killed three climbers."

EAST MEETS WEST

Before the arrival of Commodore Matthew Perry's expedition in 1853, the only information available to Americans and Europeans about Japan had come from the Dutch merchants operating in Nagasaki, who likely knew of Mount Fuji without having seen it close up.⁸⁶ When Perry's force arrived, the mountain seems to have left a strong impression on the crew, as "the cover of the *Narrative of the Expedition*, published in 1856 after the squadron returned, was illustrated with an intaglio image of a Japanese and an American facing each other with Mt. Fuji in the background."⁸⁷ In addition to its impressive form, the crew immediately recognized its usefulness as a landmark for navigation: "[t]he passage recording the crew's first sight of Mount Fuji describes the mountain as 'estimated to be eight or ten thousand feet in height, and its position W. 1/2 N. from Uruga, at a distance of fifty or sixty miles.'"⁸⁸ Mount Fuji is thus described from a surveyor's perspective, which is highly telling of the imperial motives behind Commodore Perry's expedition as the accumulation of geographical knowledge was typically the first step taken by the Western powers when preparing to conquer a territory.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Anna Jackson, "Imagining Japan: The Victorian Perception and Acquisition of Japanese Culture," *Journal of Design History* 5, no. 4 (1992): 245.

⁸⁷ Masashi Kohara, *Visions of Fuji: An Incurable Malady of Modern Japan* (Nagaizumi, Japan: Izu Photo Museum, 2011), 64.

⁸⁸ Kohara, *Visions of Fuji*, 64.

⁸⁹ Kohara, *Visions of Fuji*, 64.

After Perry's return public interest in Japan grew rapidly, and Mount Fuji's unusual shape and association with unfamiliar religions made it an easy symbol to attach to the often mythologized view of the exotic east. In 1890 an anonymous contributor to *The Decorator and Furnisher* narrated his experience of seeing Mount Fuji for the first time from the deck of his ship: "a delicate grey cloud grows up along the edge of the water, and slowly a vast cone-like cumulus, a lofty rose cloud takes shape and form, gathers clearness of outline, deepens its hue of pink and pearl, melts softly into the grey cloud beneath, soars sharply into the blue above and reveals – Fujiyama – the divine mountain. Having seen it, one no longer marvels that it dominates the Japanese imagination, that every fan, screen and jar, every piece of lacquer and porcelain bears somewhere its majestic, its exquisite outline."⁹⁰ This account is important for illustrating two concepts: first, that much of Fuji's appeal for Westerners stemmed from the idea that it was "the divine mountain," and second, that such a large portion of the Japanese objects made for sale in the West were decorated with the image of Mount Fuji that Westerners were apt to believe that Fuji "dominate[d] the Japanese imagination." The narrator's description of Fuji seeming to emerge from the clouds actively contributes to a mythological conception of the mountain, while the assertion that every decorative object made in Japan bears Fuji's image suggests that perhaps Japanese craftsmen were designing these objects to reflect what they thought Westerners would most want to purchase.

⁹⁰ "A Tourist's Idea of Japan," *The Decorator and Furnisher* 17, no. 3 (1890): 103.

The Taste for Japanese Prints

One of the ways that Mount Fuji became a familiar object to Western audiences was through the distribution of imported woodblock prints. For hundreds of years woodblock prints had occupied a low place in the hierarchy of the Japanese arts, with paintings being the preferred choice for people of good aesthetic taste.⁹¹ Paintings were typically collected by high-ranking government officials, who followed the model of the tea ceremony and displayed them “one at a time in a spirit of contemplative receptivity.”⁹² While the best paintings were praised for their individuality and ability to suggest multiple meanings, prints, especially ukiyo-e, were looked down upon for their shallow subject matter, their general audiences, and their mass production.⁹³

At the end of his second visit to Japan, the Japanese government had presented Commodore Perry with a selection of “lacquers, porcelains, fabrics, fans, and books” meant to convey to the American government and people the refinement and sophistication of Japanese arts, a collection of objects in which woodblock prints had no place.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, Western audiences were soon introduced to woodblock prints, initially as facsimiles made by visitors to Japan, before Japanese originals began to enter European markets around 1855 with one of Hokusai’s *Manga* volumes among the first described Japanese works to appear in a European print shop.⁹⁵ As they were already

⁹¹ Jacques Dufwa, *Winds from the East: A Study in the Art of Manet, Degas, Monet, and Whistler 1856-86* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1981), 27.

⁹² Dufwa, *Winds from the East*, 27.

⁹³ Dufwa, *Winds from the East*, 27.

⁹⁴ Meech and Weisburg, *Japonisme Comes to America*, 15.

⁹⁵ Toshio Watanabe, “The Western Image of Japanese Art in the Late Edo Period,” *Modern Asian Studies* 8, no. 4 (1984): 672; Dufwa, *Winds from the East*, 39. The artist Felix Bracquemond tells the story of seeing the book while visiting his printer’s shop and being so entranced by it that he pressured its owner for

being marketed to Japanese tourists as souvenirs of their travels, woodblock prints were readily available souvenirs to be sold to the suddenly increased numbers of foreign tourists.⁹⁶

Due to their bold colors and exotic subjects the prints soon caught the attention of Western artists and art critics, with France, Britain, and the United States being the top foreign consumers. The first time Japanese prints were officially displayed outside of Japan was in 1862 at the International Exhibition in London.⁹⁷ This exhibition was organized by Sir Rutherford Alcock, the first British ambassador to Japan, from the large collection of prints, print albums and illustrated books he had accumulated during his service there from 1859-1862.⁹⁸

Photographing Japan through a Western Lens: Felice Beato's Yokohama Studio

One of the artists most actively involved in transferring images of Mount Fuji from Japan to the West was Felice Beato. Beato was an Italian-born photographer who spent his early career accompanying the British military and photographing battlefields in the Middle East, India, and China before arriving in Japan in 1863.⁹⁹ In 1864 Beato partnered with Charles Wirgman, a correspondent for the *Illustrated London News*, to

over a year to let him have it. Once the book finally came into his possession he claims to have carried the book with him at all times.

⁹⁶ Watanabe, "The Western Image of Japanese Art," 674. Watanabe suggests that the predominance of Hiroshige landscapes among the European facsimiles may be evidence that these prints were judged by publishers to be particularly suitable for foreign tourists.

⁹⁷ Dufwa, *Winds from the East*, 28.

⁹⁸ Dufwa, *Winds from the East*, 28.

⁹⁹ Kohara, *Visions of Fuji*, 65.

form Beato & Wirgman, Artists and Photographers, based out of Yokohama.¹⁰⁰ Their studio produced images of Japanese news events, landscapes, and customs, which they transmitted to their Western audience by means of the *Illustrated London News* as well as by the albums Beato produced for tourists.¹⁰¹

“The November 12, 1864 edition of *Illustrated London News* carried an illustration of Mt. Fuji based on a Beato photograph. An article explained that the mountain ‘is the subject of many wonderful legends believed among the Japanese people, who regard it with superstitious veneration.’”¹⁰² Like the later account from *The Decorator and Furnisher*, the article how closely interest in Mount Fuji was tied to the fascination with Japanese religions and beliefs. Beato & Wirgman’s studio spawned a photography industry in Yokohama that specialized in images for tourists, with other Yokohama studios mimicking Beato by their commercialization of Mt. Fuji. In addition to serving as the principle subject in photos, Mount Fuji commonly appeared in backdrops, on props, in photographers’ logos, and, in one case, as a sign outside the photographer’s studio.¹⁰³ While Fuji had certainly already been selected by the Japanese as an appropriate motif to present to Westerners as being quintessentially Japanese, evidenced by the sale of woodblock prints of the mountain to Western tourists, Beato provides one of the earliest examples of the use of Mount Fuji to market a product.

¹⁰⁰ Kohara, *Visions of Fuji*, 65.

¹⁰¹ Kohara, *Visions of Fuji*, 65.

¹⁰² Kohara, *Visions of Fuji*, 65.

¹⁰³ Kohara, *Visions of Fuji*, 66.



Fig. 11. Felice Beato. *The Executioner*, ca. 1868. Hand-colored albumen print, 7 5/8 x 6 1/4 inches. Smith College Museum of Art.



Fig. 12. Kusakabe Kimbei. Untitled (*Scene of Pilgrim Climbing Mt. Fuji*), ca. 1880-1890. Hand-colored albumen print, 25.9 x 20.5 cm. Izu Photo Museum.

The West's inundation with photographs like Beato's, as well as landscape woodblock prints, heavily influenced the expectations Westerners had when visiting Japan. The large volume of images with Mount Fuji prominently in the background (either in the landscape or as a motif on screens and other decorative objects) undoubtedly contributed to the belief that Fuji was a dominant force in all aspects of Japanese life. Visitors came expecting to be awed by Fuji, and they were very rarely disappointed. When the American artist John La Farge visited Japan in 1886, one of his aims for the journey was to study Mount Fuji in the hopes that it would provide some needed inspiration for a mural of Christ's ascension he had been commissioned to paint in the Church of the Ascension in New York.¹⁰⁴ As one of the first American artists to take an interest in collecting Japanese art, he had long been fascinated by the

¹⁰⁴ James L. Yarnall, "John La Farge and Henry Adams in Japan," *American Art Journal* 21, no. 1 (1989): 67.

otherworldly represented by Fuji, and hoped that seeing the mountain in person would provide him with “an atmosphere not inimical, as ours is, to the miraculous.”¹⁰⁵ In comparing his sketch of Mount Fuji with the finished mural (Figures 13 and 14), it becomes clear that La Farge is simply translating the notion of the divine mountain into Western terms by placing in a Christian context.¹⁰⁶



Fig. 13. John La Farge, *Mountain of Fuji-San from Fuji-Kawa*, 1886. Watercolor, 10 1/4 x 14 1/2 inches. Georgia Museum of Art.



Fig. 14. John La Farge, *The Ascension*, 1886-1888. Mural in the Church of the Ascension, New York.

A similar story can be told of the artist Lilla Cabot Perry. Perry had a close connection to the culture of Japonisme well before traveling to Japan. Her husband, Thomas Sergeant Perry, was the grand-nephew of the famous Commodore Perry, and her sister-in-law Margaret was married to John La Farge.¹⁰⁷ Prior to their three-year stay in Japan, Perry’s husband expressed the somewhat naïve belief that Japanese prints “convey[ed] to the outside world the most vivid knowledge of what the country is,” and

¹⁰⁵ Meredith Martindale, *Lilla Cabot Perry: An American Impressionist* (Washington, DC: The National Museum of Women in the Arts, 1990), 17; Yarnall, “John La Farge,” 67.

¹⁰⁶ Yarnall, “John La Farge,” 67.

¹⁰⁷ Martindale, *Lilla Cabot Perry*, 17.

praised them for their “wonderful artistic simplicity.”¹⁰⁸ Upon their arrival in 1898, however, the Perrys soon discovered that the ukiyo-e prints they so greatly admired were in fact despised by the Meiji government’s leaders, who were instead caught up in an “orgy of foreignism” and attempting to westernize the Japanese art world.¹⁰⁹ Despite any possible shock this may have caused for Perry, the reality of the Meiji artistic environment did little to alter the idea of Japan she had conceived by viewing ukiyo-e prints and photographs like Beato’s. Rather, it seems that just like John La Farge her beliefs about Japan and Mount Fuji were confirmed rather than complicated by her travels.



Fig. 15. Lilla Cabot Perry. *Fuji from Lava Beach*, ca. 1898-1901. Oil on canvas, 7 x 21 3/4 in.

She was already a successful American Impressionist by the time of her journey, and much of Perry’s work in Japan continues to portray her usual subjects, landscapes and portraits of her daughters. Yet, her interest in Japanese aesthetic traditions, popularized in the West by artists like La Farge and Whistler, also led her to paint ponds

¹⁰⁸ Martindale, *Lilla Cabot Perry*, 50.

¹⁰⁹ Martindale, *Lilla Cabot Perry*, 50.

of lotus flowers and women in kimonos.¹¹⁰ One motif in particular, however, “dominated all others- the ‘simple splendour’ of the divine mountain, Fujiyama or Mount Fuji. At least thirty-five versions of Fuji by Perry were exhibited during her lifetime, and she certainly painted many others.”¹¹¹ Informed by a wealth of paintings, photographs, and shaping her perception of the mountain before seeing it, Perry’s response to Fuji was to borrow from the traditions of both ukiyo-e and French impressionism, making a series of paintings showing Fuji from a different angle and in a different light in each image.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Martindale, *Lilla Cabot Perry*, 52.

¹¹¹ Martindale, *Lilla Cabot Perry*, 52.

¹¹² Martindale, *Lilla Cabot Perry*, 52.

THE EFFECT OF JAPAN ON WESTERN ARTISTS

Within a few years of the opening of Japan to foreign trade in 1853, Japanese woodblock prints, especially those by Hokusai and Hiroshige, were being eagerly snapped up by collectors in the West.¹¹³ European painters, especially the French Impressionists, “came under the spell” of what they considered to be distinctly Japanese approaches to composition and color, a craze that was eventually termed ‘Japonisme’ by the art critic Philippe Burty in 1872.¹¹⁴ Burty himself had contributed to this craze by publishing several works in which he testified to the superiority of Japanese prints, especially those by Hokusai, above those from China and even Europe.¹¹⁵ Images of Mount Fuji from woodblock prints rapidly became so ubiquitous in France that the membership cards for the Société du Jing-lar, an elite club devoted to the study of Japanese art and culture, featured a humorous image of Mount Fuji with a saucepan being heated on its peak (Figure 16).¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Gabriel P. Weisberg, “Aspects of Japonisme,” *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 62, no. 4 (1975): 120.

¹¹⁴ Weisberg, “Aspects of Japonisme,” 120.

¹¹⁵ Inaga Shigemi, “The Making of Hokusai’s Reputation in the Context of Japonisme,” *Japan Review* 15 (2003): 77.

¹¹⁶ Weisberg, “Aspects of Japonisme,” 121. This club was founded by Burty and the artist Félix Bracquemond, who drafted the membership cards.

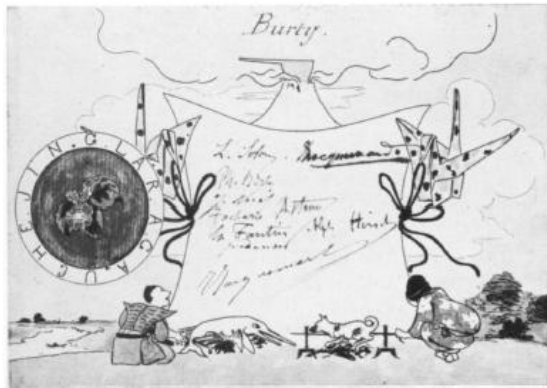


Fig. 16. M.L. Solon and Félix Bracquemond. *Philippe Burty's Membership Card for the Jing-lar Society*, ca. 1867. New York Public Library.

Many European and American artists (some more famous examples being Mary Cassatt, Vincent van Gogh, and Toulouse Lautrec) responded to Japonisme by freeing their works from rigorous modeling and perspective and brightening their color palettes. *Caprice in Purple and Gold: The Golden Screen* by James McNeill Whistler (Figure 17) provides an intriguing illustration of the formal adoption of Japonisme as well as what it may have looked like as an activity. The viewer immediately notices that the woman in *Caprice in Purple and Gold* has surrounded herself with all manner of Japanese objects, including the kimono she wears, the screen behind her, the porcelain vase at her side, and the woodblock prints scattered on the floor. Pictorial space in this picture has been subtly abstracted: the nearly aerial view of the objects lying on the floor in comparison to the profile view of the figure suggests a combination of perspectives that would Western viewers would have found disconcerting if horizon line was not hidden by the screen. Whistler freely allows the woman's kimono to engulf her instead of taking the usual care to define her form beneath the weight of the draping fabric, and while he does not fill the

canvas with bright colors, the muted colors of the scene provide a backdrop for the bright colors of the prints being studied. The prints themselves appear to be works by Hiroshige, and one can see the possible outline of Mount Fuji on a print in the lower right hand corner.¹¹⁷ The manner in which the woman studies the print in her hand likely replicates the manner in which Whistler and others regarded ukiyo-e prints, a mixture of fascination and solemn admiration.



Fig. 17. James McNeill Whistler. *Caprice in Purple and Gold: The Golden Screen*, 1864. Oil on wood panel, 19 3/4 x 26 15/16 in. The Freer Gallery of Art.

¹¹⁷ Dufwa, *Winds from the East*, 163.

MOUNT FUJI IN THE MEIJI ERA

The growing foreign commercial presence in Japan that began in the middle of the nineteenth century was accompanied by growing foreign presence in Japan's political affairs. After Japan had signed a commerce treaty with the United States in 1853 and another with Britain in 1858, the two countries began vying with each other for influence over the Japanese Government.¹¹⁸ While Britain's delegate Sir Harry Parkes worked to establish "British pre-eminence over other Western powers in Japan," American citizens sought positions as advisers to the Japanese Government and openly accused the British Government of a "series of exaction, oppressions, insults and humiliations" of the Japanese.¹¹⁹ Meanwhile, the Japanese people felt humiliated by the treaties that had been forced upon them and began to turn against the Tokugawa Shogunate for failing to respond adequately to what the people viewed as a foreign invasion, and support began to turn instead to a campaign led by young samurai to restore the emperor to power.¹²⁰

The perceived shortcomings of the Shogunate, combined with the public's fear of both economic exploitation and military invasion by foreigners, resulted in the Meiji Restoration in 1868, which returned the emperor to his position as acting head of the

¹¹⁸ Jackson, "Imagining Japan," 245.

¹¹⁹ Jackson, "Imagining Japan," 245-246.

¹²⁰ Jeehyun Lee, "Resisting Boundaries: Japonisme and Western-Style Art in Meiji Japan" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2011), 37.

government.¹²¹ The new government officials had enough contact with the West to realize that in order to maintain her sovereignty and reverse the unequal treaties of the past, Japan needed to learn modern military technology.¹²² Thus the Meiji government had “only two goals in mind: the reinforcement of the imperial state and modernization through industrialization.”¹²³ To achieve these goals, the government began a program of “tremendous and rapid transformation, adopting Western modes of production and political and economic organization,” while also working to control the way Japan was perceived abroad.¹²⁴ As the now unofficial but internationally-recognized symbol of Japan, Mount Fuji was affected by these developments in a variety of ways.

Mount Fuji on the International Stage

The Tokugawa government had shown little interest in the exhibition of Japanese products at the time of the London International Exhibition in 1862, where the display of Japanese objects had been arranged by Rutherford Alcock from his personal collection (as mentioned above). After hearing of the popularity of the exhibit, the Japanese government sent a group of ambassadors to the Exhibition, who were shocked by what was being presented as Japan’s art and culture.¹²⁵ Beautiful porcelains were displayed

¹²¹ Lee, “Resisting Boundaries,” 37.

¹²² Lee, “Resisting Boundaries,” 37-38.

¹²³ Lee, “Resisting Boundaries,” 38.

¹²⁴ Jackson, “Imagining Japan,” 250.

¹²⁵ Lee, “Resisting Boundaries,” 45.

next to cheap items like straw hats, a pairing so absurd that one ambassador complained that the exhibit felt like being in a “junky antique shop.”¹²⁶

Fearful of the consequences of having Japanese culture misunderstood by Westerners, the officials encouraged the Tokugawa government to take an active role in the next international exhibition, the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1867.¹²⁷

“Although the Tokugawa government asked the leader of each *han*, or ‘feudal domain,’ to submit its special regional products, only the Satsuma and Saga regions responded,” meaning that these two regions alone were tasked with representing the entire country.¹²⁸

Even so, the number of objects sent to the Paris Exposition was so great that the Japanese area took up more than half of the space allotted for Japan to share with China and Thailand, although these “consisted mostly of inexpensive, small decorative objects” and none had been commissioned specifically for the exhibition.¹²⁹ Without the central curatorship of the Tokugawa government, Japan’s early attempts at exhibiting itself abroad were disorganized and were hardly any more effective at representing Japanese culture than the exhibits curated by foreigners.¹³⁰ It was not until the establishment of the Meiji government that Japan would begin to use the international exhibitions to shape foreign perceptions of the country.

As the young elites who had studied abroad in European cities at the end of the Tokugawa period became the high-ranking bureaucrats in the new Meiji government,

¹²⁶ Yoshida Mitsukuni, ed. *Zusetsu bankoku hakurankaishi: 1851-1942* [Illustrated History of World’s Fairs: 1851-1942] (Kyoto, Shibunkaku Shuppan, 1999), 145, translated in Lee, “Resisting Boundaries,” 45.

¹²⁷ Lee, “Resisting Boundaries,” 48; Dufwa, *Winds from the East*, 29.

¹²⁸ Lee, “Resisting Boundaries,” 48.

¹²⁹ Lee, “Resisting Boundaries,” 48.

¹³⁰ Lee, “Resisting Boundaries,” 49.

they brought a fuller understanding of the opportunities provided by international exhibitions.¹³¹ Having seen the exhibitions of Japanese objects curated by Westerners, they were acutely aware of the messages these displays conveyed about Japan and saw the expositions as a precious platform for direct communication with the Western public.¹³² With this knowledge in hand, the Meiji government appointed a special committee to oversee the exhibit for the 1873 Vienna World Exposition, the first international exposition that Japan fully participated in under official government supervision.¹³³

The popularity of Japanese art at this exhibition also meant that Japanese prints became highly fashionable among much wider audiences than the artists and cultural elites who had already begun collecting them, and woodblock prints began flooding Western markets; Mount Fuji was likely a popular motif since it was already a favorite subject among the landscape prints being sold to tourists.¹³⁴ Having realized the economic benefits of exhibiting Japanese art abroad, Japan participated in all the world exhibitions from that point on and began to use the international expositions as a means of crafting its international reputation.¹³⁵ At the 1878 Paris Exposition, Matsukata Masayoshi, then Vice-Minister of Finance and President of the Japanese Commission to the Exposition Universelle, expressed some of Japan's goals for the exhibition and its accompanying catalogue:

¹³¹ Lee, "Resisting Boundaries," 49.

¹³² Lee, "Resisting Boundaries," 42.

¹³³ Kohara, *Visions of Fuji*, 67.

¹³⁴ Watanabe, "The Western Image of Japanese Art," 668.

¹³⁵ Jackson, "Imagining Japan," 252.

... the development of increasing relationships between the Empire of Japan and the nations of the two continents requires more than ever a publication of a work which allows strangers to form an exact idea of its geography and history . . . This publication, although short, contains numerous pieces of information useful and especially authentic that we hope... will interest the visitors to the Japanese exhibition, who, after viewing the objects on exhibition, would desire to study the country.¹³⁶

To aid in their mission of encouraging the study of Japanese culture, the committee also made sure to send only the items that they believed would have the greatest appeal for the Western visitors and organized the exhibit “according to the order established by Western nations in previous world’s fairs,” which prioritized achievements in industry and the fine arts.¹³⁷ The Meiji government’s careful study of the international exhibitions had also resulted in a “growing awareness of art as an invaluable source of national pride,” so the exhibition committee carefully curated the selection of art to be shown.¹³⁸ The artist Yuichi Takahasi, who painted in the Western style, was asked by the exposition committee to exhibit a painting of Mount Fuji, “while the lacquer artist Zeshin Shibata showed a landscape of Mt. Fuji and the beach at Tago-no-ura.”¹³⁹ The committee’s apparent preference for works showing Mount Fuji suggests that the government believed that images of Fuji were what Westerners wanted to see, and that Fuji also presented an image of the beautiful, unique Japan that the Meiji government was promoting. In addition to these pieces of art, Mount Fuji was included throughout the display as a unifying visual device, and would continue to feature prominently in all of Japan’s exhibits at the world’s fairs until the middle of the twentieth century.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶ Lee, “Resisting Boundaries,” 50.

¹³⁷ Lee, “Resisting Boundaries,” 51.

¹³⁸ Lee, “Resisting Boundaries,” 51.

¹³⁹ Kohara, *Visions of Fuji*, 67.

¹⁴⁰ Kohara, *Visions of Fuji*, 67.

Western writings on Japan's earlier contributions to world expositions, from the first exhibit curated by Rutherford Alcock in 1862 to exhibitions in the 1880s, reveal that Japanese art was initially valued merely as a spectacle of bizarre but attractive objects.¹⁴¹ Commentaries on Japanese art from the earlier exhibitions from the 1860s to the 1880s are limited to general comments, typically remarks about the Japan's childlike connection to nature, despite the general pattern for commentaries being to single out individual objects or firms."¹⁴² For example, the architect William Burges wrote about the whole of the Japanese exhibit at the London Exposition of 1862 in comparison to the gothic-inspired furniture being shown by William Morris:

If, however, the visitor wishes to see the real Middle Ages, he must visit the Japanese Court, for at the present day the arts of the Middle Ages have deserted Europe, and are only to be found in the East. Here in England we can get mediaeval objects manufactured for us with pain and difficulty, but in Egypt, Syria, and in Japan you can buy them in the bazaars. Even at Constantinople we have seen damascened work, translucid champlevé, and painted enamels all placed side by side in the same shop, and all modern. But in the Japanese Court we see still rarer articles; there are cases filled with the most wonderful little groups of men and animals carved in ivory, and just as much colour and gold delicately applied as relieves the tone of the ivory . . . Other objects of attraction are the bronzes, most marvelously cast and of different colours. . . Truly the Japanese Court is the real mediaeval court of the Exhibition."¹⁴³

Eventually, the strategies employed by the Meiji government succeeded in raising the status of Japanese works from medieval decorative objects to fine art whose creators were worthy of individual recognition. Ogata Gekko (1859-1920) was among the first Japanese artists to break the pattern of Japanese anonymity and gain international fame at

¹⁴¹ Jackson, "Imagining Japan," 247. This is particularly interesting given that the Japanese organizers published the names of the makers of all the works on display in their exhibition catalogue.

¹⁴² Jackson, "Imagining Japan," 247.

¹⁴³ Lee, "Resisting Boundaries," 44.

the exhibitions.¹⁴⁴ He received a prize at the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition in 1893 for a painting of Edo's Sannō Festival, and eventually won the Gold Prize at the St. Louis Louisiana Purchase Exhibition in 1904 for selections of his series *One Hundred Views of Mount Fuji*.¹⁴⁵ It is not unlikely that Gekko's choice to exhibit his views of Mount Fuji helped him win the prize, as the Meiji government's exhibits had encouraged a close association between Mount Fuji and the fine arts since the Vienna Exposition of 1873.

Changes to the Religious Environment

During the Meiji government's response to the opportunities and threats presented by their interactions with the West, one of the earliest changes implemented was to the religious environment surrounding Mount Fuji. In 1825, almost 30 years before the arrival of Commodore Perry, the Japanese political philosopher and writer Aizawa Seishisai had warned that when "barbarians plan to subdue a country not their own, they start by opening commerce and watch for a sign of weakness. If an opportunity is presented, they will preach their alien religion to captivate the people's hearts."¹⁴⁶ Since the government had already been forced to sign several commerce treaties in the 1850s, the new Meiji government immediately turned their attention to the problem of religious invasion and reacted by making Shinto the official state religion in 1868.¹⁴⁷ While the primary purpose of this policy was to stop the spread of Christianity, it also had the

¹⁴⁴ Andreas Marks, *Japanese Woodblock Prints: Artists, Publishers, and Masterworks 1680-1900* (Rutland, VT: Tuttle Publishing, 2010), 172.

¹⁴⁵ Marks, *Japanese Woodblock Prints*, 172.

¹⁴⁶ William G. Beasley, *The Meiji Restoration* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1972), 74.

¹⁴⁷ Hori, "Mountains and Their Importance," 2.

effects of bringing Shinto under government control and weakening all other religious groups centered on Fuji.¹⁴⁸

Shugendo was one of the most severely affected of these religions. Shinto's promotion to state religion was accompanied by a strict regulation of all religions and had required a strict separation between Shinto and Buddhism.¹⁴⁹ Since Shugendo was an amalgamation of both of these religions, without strong ties to either of them, it could no longer exist under the new policy and was banned.¹⁵⁰ Most Shugendo priests thus returned to secular occupations, while some chose to become priests of the Shingon or Tendai schools of Buddhism.¹⁵¹ The Fuji-kō adapted more successfully than Shugendo, as many "joined Shinto sects while continuing to function as semi-autonomous sub-groups."¹⁵² Eventually, under the leadership of Shishino Nakaba, the Fuji-kō organized into the Association of Fuji Confraternities (Fuji Issan Kōsha), which was officially established as the Fusōkyō sect of Shinto in 1882.¹⁵³ Shinto itself had been made a public institution in 1871, giving the state the power to appoint priests and control shrine activities, and as a result Shinto practices were increasingly modified to serve the state's

¹⁴⁸ Nobutaka Inoue and Mark Teeuwen, "The Formation of Sect Shinto in Modernizing Japan," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 29, no. 3 (2002): 406.

¹⁴⁹ Hori, "Mountains and Their Importance," 2.

¹⁵⁰ Hori, "Mountains and Their Importance," 2. Prior to 1868 most Shinto shrines throughout Japan were accompanied by a Buddhist temple, and more than 90% of the villages surrounding the Japanese Alps were served by Shugendo priests. For more on the separation of Shinto and Buddhism, see Inoue and Teeuwen 410-411.

¹⁵¹ Hori, "Mountains and Their Importance," 2. Shugendo made a slight recovery after World War II, when the Occupation Government lifted the restrictions on religion, but today it is practiced in such small numbers that it is largely an invisible minority religion. For a brief discussion of how Fuji's religions fared in the aftermath of World War II see Earhart, 134.

¹⁵² Inoue and Teeuwen, "The Formation of Sect Shinto," 424.

¹⁵³ Inoue and Teeuwen, "The Formation of Sect Shinto," 423.

needs.¹⁵⁴ By taking control of the religious groups located around Mount Fuji, the Meiji government laid the foundation for Mount Fuji's eventual use for state purposes.

Shinto's adoption as the official state religion was undoubtedly due to its being commensurate with the Meiji Government's nationalist goals, as its teachings that Japan was a land of divine origin and home to the gods provided a spiritual basis for Japanese superiority over the rest of the world.¹⁵⁵ While other religions that had previously determined Mount Fuji's identity were in decline, Fuji itself was adopted and brought under secular control along with Shinto. This process was part of Meiji efforts to channel foreign stereotypes about Japanese mysticism and harmony with nature into an image of Japan's uniqueness.¹⁵⁶ Mount Fuji's unique form made it the ideal emblem of the unique nation, and bureaucrats began a program to promote Mount Fuji as "a symbol of the nation with global appeal," using government-sponsored textbooks as their primary tool to spread this idea at home.¹⁵⁷ One telling example is a song called 'Fujisan' from a songbook published in 1881 by the Education Ministry, which contains the lyrics "Foreigners gaze up admiringly. So do Japanese. [Fuji] is our pride."¹⁵⁸

An important text during this period was Shigetaka Shiga's *Nihon Fukeiron* (The Japanese Landscape), published in 1894 in the midst of the Sino-Japanese war.¹⁵⁹

"Tapping into geographic scholarship, *Nihon Fukeiron* makes the argument that the

¹⁵⁴ Inoue and Teeuwen, "The Formation of Sect Shinto," 411.

¹⁵⁵ Beasley, *The Meiji Restoration*, 75.

¹⁵⁶ Earhart, *Mount Fuji*, 116.

¹⁵⁷ Earhart, *Mount Fuji*, 119; and Andrew Bernstein, "Whose Fuji? Religion, Region, and State in the Fight for a National Symbol" *Monumenta Nipponica* 63, no. 1 (2008): 60.

¹⁵⁸ Bernstein, "Whose Fuji?" 60. Incidentally, indicative of Japan's efforts to westernize is that the song was written to a tune originally composed by Joseph Haydn.

¹⁵⁹ Kohara, *Visions of Fuji*, 67. The book was so widely read that it had gone through fifteen printings by 1903.

Japanese landscape is unsurpassed in its ‘sheer beauty,’” and suggests that, just as other mountains in Japan were often given nicknames after Fuji, like Satsuma Fuji (Kaimon-dake) and Ezo Fuji (Mount Yotei), “Yushan, the highest peak in Taiwan, should be named ‘the Taiwan Fuji,’ as it resembles our Mt. Fuji, and Mount Tai in Shandong Province ‘the Shandong Fuji.’”¹⁶⁰ Shiga further adds that “throughout our emperor’s domain, they all should carry the name of Mt. Fuji,” clearly equating Japan’s prestige with the name of Mount Fuji and aiming to extend this prestige throughout Japan’s conquered territories.¹⁶¹ Furthermore, the renaming of mountains in these territories “suggests a process by which Mt. Fuji functioned as an intermediary in grafting people’s affection for their birthplace onto a larger patriotism and loyalty to the state,” while also encouraging a worldview in which Japan was the center.¹⁶²

Climbing Mount Fuji

Around the same time that Mount Fuji was being remodeled into a patriotic symbol, interest in climbing Mount Fuji for recreational, rather than religious, purposes began sweeping the nation. Mountaineering groups such as the Fuji Mountain Climbing Association for Students and the Japanese Alpine Association were founded around the beginning of the twentieth century, and the climb up Mount Fuji rapidly became so popular that by 1909 concerns were already being expressed about its preservation.¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ Kohara, *Visions of Fuji*, 67.

¹⁶¹ Kohara, *Visions of Fuji*, 67.

¹⁶² Kohara, *Visions of Fuji*, 68.

¹⁶³ Bernstein, “Whose Fuji?” 61-63. This concern was voiced in an article titled “On the Protection of Mount Fuji” by Kojima Usui, an active proponent of mountaineering in Japan, in which he condemned the growing number of “conveniences” being constructed on and around the mountain and argued against the proposed construction of an alpine railway to Fuji’s peak.

This mountaineering fervor, although connected to Fuji's declining religious atmosphere, was also the result of yet another Meiji strategy to combat foreign pressures, in this case by encouraging the Japanese people to regain a dominant position in their geographical environment.

At the end of the 19th century, the study of geography was "increasingly regarded as both the queen of the sciences and an indispensable tool of statecraft," as it was heavily utilized by Western imperialist nations such as Britain and the United States as a means of overtaking foreign territory.¹⁶⁴ Consequently, the Tokyo Geographical Society, modeled on the Royal Geographical Society of London, was founded in 1879, and soon after that universities began appointing chairs of geography for the first time.¹⁶⁵ With this stress on geographical study came the rise of outdoor clubs and mountaineering groups, and a massive effort to educate the general public in geography.¹⁶⁶ The formation of these groups was also intended to help cultivate a sense of national pride through place, and was accompanied by a flood of literature encouraging Japan's youth to venture into the mountains.¹⁶⁷ Given the imperialist notion that "linked climbing with claiming," mobilizing mass numbers of young Japanese into the mountains was a way of

¹⁶⁴ Kären Wigen, "Discovering the Japanese Alps: Meiji Mountaineering and the Quest for Geographical Enlightenment," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 31, no. 1 (2005): 3.

¹⁶⁵ Wigen, "Discovering the Japanese Alps," 3. The Society's purpose was as much political as it was scientific- its members included military officers, diplomats, and aristocrats, and one of their first tasks was to settle border disputes in Hokkaido and Sakhalin.

¹⁶⁶ Wigen, "Discovering the Japanese Alps," 5. Two of the writers most responsible for popularizing mountaineering, Shiga Shigetaka and Kojima Usui, held the conviction that "all 47 million Japanese must cultivate knowledge of geography."

¹⁶⁷ Wigen, "Discovering the Japanese Alps," 4.

reclaiming Japanese land from the imperial powers of the West, who had already sponsored expeditions to Japan's mountains starting in the 1860s.¹⁶⁸

Mount Fuji in Meiji Art

In the realm of artistic production, Meiji Japan struggled to reconcile its traditional arts with the Westernization being promoted by the government. In 1876 the Ministry of Public Works established the Technical Art School, an institution that invited European artists to teach Western methods of drawing and painting to students, with the goal of producing future engineering draughtsmen, industrial designers, and architectural decorators.¹⁶⁹ A decade later the government founded the Tokyo School of Fine Arts which emphasized the complete opposite and taught only traditional Japanese methods of painting, sculpture, and decorative arts.¹⁷⁰ While some sided heavily with one school of thought or the other, most artists found themselves caught between the desire to uphold the traditions of their teachers and the desire to incorporate Western methods into their works.

The artist who best embodies this struggle is Kobayashi Kiyochika. Primarily active in the 1870s and 1880s, Kiyochika was a woodblock print artist whose interest in Western art led him to study under Charles Wirgman, Felice Beato's studio partner.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁸ Wigen, "Discovering the Japanese Alps," 5.

¹⁶⁹ Lee, "Resisting Boundaries," 9.

¹⁷⁰ Lee, "Resisting Boundaries," 9.

¹⁷¹ Henry D. Smith II, *Kiyochika: Artist of Meiji Japan* (Santa Barbara, CA: Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 1988), 7-8. While there is no direct documentary evidence of the link between Kiyochika and Wirgman, the second of Kiyochika's biographers to make this claim, Kurosaki Makoto, knew the artist quite well. In consideration of this and Kiyochika's experiments with the Western style it is highly likely he had a European teacher.

Throughout his career Kiyochika experimented with ways of using the woodblock medium to emulate various Western artistic methods, such as copperplate etching and lithography, while attempting to answer the pertinent question of what Japanese art should look like in the modern era.¹⁷² Kiyochika frequently uses Mount Fuji in his experiments as a way of adding a level of familiarity to the otherwise unfamiliar appearance of these prints. In *Mt. Fuji at Sunset on a Lake in Suruga Province* Kiyochika produces “a type of illustration well established in the West but hitherto unknown in Japan – the hunting print.”¹⁷³ He included Fuji as a prominent part of the scene so as not to alienate his viewers. It was, however, an unsuccessful attempt at introducing a new genre, and Kiyochika would not produce any further hunting scenes after this diptych.¹⁷⁴



Fig. 18. Kobayashi Kiyochika. *Mt. Fuji at Sunset on a Lake in Suruga Province*, 1878. Polychrome woodblock print, 36.3 x 48 cm.

¹⁷² Smith, *Kiyochika*, 30.

¹⁷³ Smith, *Kiyochika*, 30.

¹⁷⁴ Smith, *Kiyochika*, 30.



Fig. 19. Kobayashi Kiyochika. *Mt. Fuji at Dusk from Edo Bridge*, 1879. Polychrome woodblock print, 8 7/16 x 13 1/8 in. Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

Mt. Fuji at Dusk from Edo Bridge, produced a year later, is a more harmonious experiment. It takes the tradition of the view of Mount Fuji from Edo and updates it by adding the trappings of modern Edo life: the cloud of smoke from a local factory, and the artificial light produced by gas lamps. Gas lamps were considered the premier symbol of enlightenment in the 1870s, and provided Kiyochika with possibilities for experimentation with light and nighttime views of the urban environment that were unavailable to his predecessors.¹⁷⁵ Kiyochika's reliance on the image of Mount Fuji to anchor his stylistic experiments echoed the reliance of the Japanese people on Mount Fuji to anchor their national identity, a symbol that assured them of their unique culture at a time when all aspects of life were dominated by the imitation of the West.

Despite the craze for Japanese decorative objects and woodblock prints, few artists in the United States took an interest in studying Japanese artistic techniques. Two notable exceptions to this trend, however, were the artists Bertha Lum (1879-1954) and

¹⁷⁵ Smith, *Kiyochika*, 37.

Lilian Miller (1895-1943). While these artists followed different paths in their study of art, both became woodblock print artists who worked in Japan and sold their prints to Western consumers via their social networks in the West. Bertha Lum had become fascinated by Japanese woodblock prints while studying at the Art Institute of Chicago, and while on her honeymoon to Japan in 1903 she purchased a set of printmaking tools.¹⁷⁶ She later wrote that she had only had enough time in the print shop where she found the tools to purchase them, and had to work out how to use them once she returned home.¹⁷⁷ Nevertheless, her early efforts in printmaking proved successful, and in the spring of 1907 she returned to Japan to begin studying printmaking in earnest.¹⁷⁸

In contrast, Lilian Miller was born and partly raised in Japan, and “her entire formation as an artist, both as a painter and as a printmaker, took place there,” making her unique among the expatriate artists working in Japan at the beginning of the 20th century who had all at least begun their formal art training in the West.¹⁷⁹ Miller’s father enrolled her in the atelier of Kano Tomonobu in 1904, where she studied painting under Tomonobu and Shimada Bokusen until 1909, when her father Ransford, an American diplomat, was transferred to Washington, DC and the family moved back to the United States.¹⁸⁰ After graduating college and returning to Japan in 1918, Miller resumed her training with Bokusen, who had become firmly entrenched in the Nihonga establishment

¹⁷⁶ Julia Meech and Gabriel P. Weisberg, *Japonisme Comes to America: The Japanese Impact on the Graphic Arts 1876-1925* (New York: Harry Abrams, 1990), 127-128.

¹⁷⁷ Meech and Weisberg, *Japonisme Comes to America*, 128.

¹⁷⁸ Meech and Weisberg, *Japonisme Comes to America*, 128.

¹⁷⁹ Kendall H. Brown, “Lilian Miller: An American Artist in Japan,” *Impressions* 27 (2005): 81.

¹⁸⁰ Brown, “Lilian Miller,” 82.

and encouraged Miller's desires to pursue traditional Japanese-style painting.¹⁸¹

According to Miller, Bokusen saw her as a way 'to bring the real Japanese art to the western world and show what the genuine article is really like,' and she in turn saw herself as "a sort of connecting link with a different world."¹⁸²

Some time before 1920 Miller took an interest in printmaking as a means of supplementing her income, turning to the now established expatriate printmaker Bertha Lum for instruction.¹⁸³ The two lived together in Tokyo for a year, during which time Lum tutored Miller in printmaking and figural drawing.¹⁸⁴ Although their relationship soured during the winter of 1919-1920, Lum's instruction and connections were crucial to Miller's start as a printmaker as Lum had introduced Miller to her carver and printer, whom Miller continued to use after parting ways with Lum.

Both Lilian Miller and Bertha Lum relied on personal connections and participation in exhibitions to sell their prints, a traditionally American method of marketing one's works as opposed to the Japanese practice of selling woodblock prints in publishers' shops. Miller's first prints were sold with the help of some of her American friends in Japan and Korea, who organized solo exhibitions of her work "at the Tokyo home of Mrs. Charles Burnett, wife of the American military attaché, in December

¹⁸¹ Brown, "Lilian Miller," 82.

¹⁸² Brown, "Lilian Miller," 82. Bokusen is reported to have been so convinced of her potential for bringing 'real' Japanese art to the Western world that instead of the usual ten minutes of attention allotted to each of his students during the day, he would spend an hour coaching Miller.

¹⁸³ Brown, "Lilian Miller," 83.

¹⁸⁴ Brown, "Lilian Miller," 84-85. Brown speculates that one of the primary causes of the downward turn in their relationship may have been Miller's refusal to acknowledge Lum's role in her creative development. Despite living and studying with Lum, a figure specialist, Miller claimed to have suddenly been struck with the ability to draw figures by chance.

1920,” as well as in Seoul later that month and Yokohama in the spring of 1921.¹⁸⁵

Miller’s personal connections through her father’s work at the embassy helped her to establish a strong client base among the community of American diplomats and expatriate businessmen, who would eventually help her break into the wider American market for Japanese woodblock prints once they returned home.¹⁸⁶ Miller’s reliance on her connections rather than on print shops could possibly be the result of a xenophobic art community in Japan, in which publishers were reluctant to hire foreign artists. The career of Bertha Lum, however, suggests an alternate explanation.

Lum made her official debut as a working printmaker in 1912 by exhibiting a print at the tenth annual public exhibition of the Pacific Painting Society in Tokyo.¹⁸⁷

She was the only woman, the only Westerner, and the only woodblock printer to have a work shown at that exhibition; her presence there is a great indicator of the respect she had earned from the Tokyo artists due to her skill and reputation for hard work.¹⁸⁸

Despite her positive relationship with the Tokyo art establishment, however, she (like Miller) still relied on a network of American clients to sell her work. Although she spent most of her time abroad, Lum kept a studio in California where she would paint watercolors to be brought to Japan and turned into prints.¹⁸⁹ In the early twentieth century it was common for American artists, especially women, to maintain open studios as a way to cultivate patrons, and this is more than likely the reason why Lum continued

¹⁸⁵ Brown, “Lilian Miller,” 88.

¹⁸⁶ Brown, “Lilian Miller,” 88-89.

¹⁸⁷ Meech and Weisberg, *Japonisme Comes to America*, 139.

¹⁸⁸ Meech and Weisberg, *Japonisme Comes to America*, 139.

¹⁸⁹ Meech and Weisberg, *Japonisme Comes to America*, 144, 155.

to return to her California studio even after moving her primary residence to Peking in the 1920s.¹⁹⁰

In Lum's case, then, her relationship with the Tokyo artistic community precludes the idea that publishers might have refused to sell prints made by foreigners. What we must therefore conclude is that woodblock prints made in Japan by Western artists were much more difficult to sell than those made by born and bred Japanese artists. Likewise we may also conclude that even into the 1920s and 30s, the popularity of woodblock prints had just as much to do with being Japanese products, and signifiers of the exotic East, as their aesthetic value.

Illustrative of this point is that one of Lilian Miller's regular clients during the 1920s and 30s was John D. Rockefeller Jr., whereas his wife, Abby, who was a collector and connoisseur of Edo-period prints, never took an interest in Miller's work.¹⁹¹ This is further supported when looking at the subject matter that Miller and Lum chose to portray, as both artists limited themselves to subject matter that would appeal to the Western conception of traditional woodblock prints- pictures of temples, women in kimonos, and views of Mount Fuji. Lum chose to print her works on a thin tracing paper that was much thinner than that generally used by the ukiyo-e artists, which muted the colors and gave her works the appearance of being faded antiques.¹⁹² In the context of Lum and Miller's works, Mount Fuji is once again a tool used to help in their marketing as 'Japanese' products for a Western audience.

¹⁹⁰ Meech and Weisberg, *Japonisme Comes to America*, 155-156.

¹⁹¹ Brown, "Lilian Miller," 89-90. It is also indicative of the perceived value of Miller's works that Rockefeller purchased her prints as decorations for conference rooms.

¹⁹² Meech and Weisberg, *Japonisme Comes to America*, 144.



Fig. 20. Bertha Lum. *Boat Seen against Mount Fuji*, early 20th century. Polychrome woodblock print, 13.1 x 8.9 cm. Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.



Fig. 21. Lilian Miller. *Sunrise on Fujiyama, Japan*, 1928. Polychrome woodblock print, 38.6 x 54.8 cm. Scripps College.

Because Lum and Miller's careers were so dependent on their knowledge of what American audiences desired in Japanese prints, their works are also highly revealing of the assumptions Americans continued to hold about Japanese art and culture half a century after Commodore Perry's arrival. In contrast to Kiyochika's embrace of and experimentation with modern elements like gas lamps and telegraph wires in the 1890s, Lum and Miller avoid overt signs of modernity in their works. While Lum occasionally produced night scenes with artificial lighting, in almost all cases she reduces the presence of the lights by depicting them as abstracted glowing orbs. Neither artist produced any views of modern Tokyo, and their views of Mount Fuji are exclusively seen from the countryside. In short, Lum and Miller produced works for an audience who refused to acknowledge the modernization of Japan and expected woodblock prints to look like

those by Hokusai and Hiroshige, and Mount Fuji became an important motif for these artists in their attempts to recreate the West's idealized vision of Japan.

FUJI IN THE FACE OF MODERNITY: THE TWENTIETH CENTURY AND BEYOND

Leading up to World War II, in Japan the 1930s was a time of “social and political confusion marked by economic depression, political radicalism and repression,” in addition to the tensions of military aggression in China.¹⁹³ As a result, Japanese society abandoned its obsession with Western ideas in favor of intense nativism.¹⁹⁴ When war broke out with China in 1937, the Cabinet Information Office held a national competition for a patriotic march that would become “a national anthem forever loved by the people.”¹⁹⁵ The winning song, selected from among more than 50,000 submissions, features a verse about Mount Fuji: “The figure of Fuji in the clear skies/ Towering through the morning clouds/ Is the pride of our Japan/ An invincible nation.”¹⁹⁶

The proclamation that Fuji “is the pride of our Japan” echoes the sentiments of the early Meiji-era children’s song mentioned in the previous chapter, but here the reference to foreigners gazing admiringly at Fuji has been replaced by the image of Fuji as a symbol of the nation’s military strength. The difference between these two songs reflects the change in the way Japan saw itself in relation to the rest of the world during the 1930s: no longer struggling to solidify their place as equals among the nations of the

¹⁹³ Kendall H. Brown, *Visions of Japan: Kawase Hasui’s Masterpieces* (Amsterdam: Hotei Publishing, 2004), 28.

¹⁹⁴ Brown, *Visions of Japan*, 28.

¹⁹⁵ Kohara, *Visions of Fuji*, 75.

¹⁹⁶ Kohara, *Visions of Fuji*, 76.

West in order to maintain their sovereignty, the Japanese people now saw themselves as a dominant nation ready to defend itself from foreign threats.

Throughout this period and Japan's entry into World War II, Mount Fuji was an important component of visual propaganda. Fuji featured heavily in government-issued photo-journals and postcards aimed at maintaining the public morale and assuring the people of imminent victory. In images of Emperor Hirohito overseeing military exercises in the shadow of the mountain and planes flying in front of it (Figure 22), Fuji stands as the proud emblem of the nation, and even gives the impression of providing a protecting presence over the Japanese fighters. In an ironic twist, a set of American photographs from the end of the war uses virtually identical imagery to portray America's victory over Japan; in the case of the American photo, however, a higher vantage point is used to highlight the American military's dominance over enemy territory (Figure 23).



Fig. 22. "MC-20 Transport Plane Flies," ca. 1940. Postcard (gelatin silver print), 8.5 x 13.5 cm. Izu Photo Museum.



Fig. 23. *Untitled (Mt. Fuji and US Warplanes)*, 1944-1945. Gelatin silver print, 20.5 x 25.6 cm. Izu Photo Museum.

The intensification of Japanese nationalism during this period can be traced in the work of Kawase Hasui (1883-1957). Trained in the ukiyo-e tradition of woodblock printing, Hasui specialized in landscapes and traveled throughout Japan to sketch famous places and views of the countryside.¹⁹⁷ While landscapes were already commonly imbued with nationalist sentiments, Hasui's response to the surge in nationalism during the war with China and Japan's entry into World War II was to focus on producing images of Mount Fuji.¹⁹⁸ Of the fifty-two prints of Fuji he produced during his lifetime, the majority "date from between 1931 and 1945."¹⁹⁹ Because of this nationalism and the rising tensions and eventual war with the West, many Japanese also began to feel a strong nostalgia for what they referred to as the 'true Japan,' or Japan as it had been before the adoption of Western technology and habits.²⁰⁰ Many of Hasui's prints appeal to this

¹⁹⁷ Brown, *Visions of Japan*, 21.

¹⁹⁸ Brown, *Visions of Japan*, 29.

¹⁹⁹ Brown, *Visions of Japan*, 29.

²⁰⁰ Brown, *Visions of Japan*, 26.

longing by eliminating all aspects of modernity, with its troubling ties to the West, and producing images that showed the Japanese landscape or man-made objects, such as wooden temple gates, that were old and therefore purely Japanese.²⁰¹ Hasui did not always stick to this strategy, however, and sometimes his prints showed Mount Fuji or antique buildings paired with modern elements, including power lines and steel bridges, “as if to underscore the beauty of the old through its contrast with the new.”²⁰²



Fig. 24. Kawase Hasui. *Dawn on Fuji*, ca. 1930-1945. Polychrome woodblock print, 24.1 x 25 cm. Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.

Immediately after World War II, the occupation of Japan by American troops and civilians gave new life to the market for woodblock prints. Just as they had in the nineteenth century, the Americans found woodblock prints to be the perfect souvenir, as they were inexpensive but beautiful images that showed a romanticized vision of

²⁰¹ Brown, *Visions of Japan*, 26.

²⁰² Brown, *Visions of Japan*, 26.

Japan.²⁰³ Hasui's prints were especially popular among the occupation authorities, who purchased them wholesale then resold them at the base post exchanges.²⁰⁴ With their minimal traces of human presence, the landscapes satisfied the demand among foreigners and Japanese government officials for images that translated the once politically charged places of Japan into charming touristy locales.²⁰⁵

The Question of Ownership

Throughout the Meiji period, the government's efforts to turn Mount Fuji into a public place to experience national pride had created increasing tensions between the secular public and Fuji's remaining religious community, tensions that eventually escalated to legal conflict in the postwar period when its peak became the subject of a heated territorial dispute. In 1952 a committee appointed by the Finance Ministry had determined that the peak belonged to a Shinto shrine called Fujisan Hongū Sengen Jinja (hereafter referred to as Fujisan Shrine), much to the outrage of protesters who believed that the peak should be state-owned, public land instead.²⁰⁶ While it may seem odd that a shrine located at Fuji's southwestern base would have a claim to its peak, the precedent for ownership came at the beginning of the Tokugawa Shogunate when Tokugawa Tadanaga "ruled that the management of activities occurring on the peak fell under the shrine's jurisdiction."²⁰⁷ This authority was reaffirmed in 1799 when the Bureau of Temples and Shrines decreed that Fujisan Shrine had the right to perform burial rites for

²⁰³ Brown, *Visions of Japan*, 23.

²⁰⁴ Brown, *Visions of Japan*, 23.

²⁰⁵ Brown, *Visions of Japan*, 23.

²⁰⁶ Bernstein, "Whose Fuji?" 53.

²⁰⁷ Bernstein, "Whose Fuji?" 55.

pilgrims who had died anywhere from the eighth station up to the topmost peak, thus providing the shrine with documentation of its control of this portion of the mountain.²⁰⁸

Despite the growing presence of recreational climbers on Mount Fuji, religious and secular entities were able to exist there with relatively little conflict until the Allied Occupation of Japan following World War II. Questions over the ownership of Mount Fuji's summit did not arise until after the so-called 'Shinto Directive,' which, while guaranteeing religious freedom to the Japanese, also "stipulated a strict separation of religion and state to prevent the government from favoring a particular set of doctrines and institutions, i.e. Shinto."²⁰⁹ Prior to the Shinto Directive the religion had enjoyed more than 300 years of government patronage, especially under the Meiji government who had declared "that shrines were public, not private, institutions whose primary function was to perform 'rites of state.'"²¹⁰ Thus the summit of Mount Fuji had previously existed under the simultaneous control of Fujisan Shrine and the state government, but with the separation of Shinto and state it now had to be decided which party would retain Fuji's title.

This proved to be no easy task. While the committee appointed to review these property cases usually favored transferring ownership of sacred land to the shrines and

²⁰⁸ Bernstein, "Whose Fuji?" 58. This decree was in response to a dispute between Fujisan Shrine and the villages of Yoshida and Subashiri. Documentation from the 18th century shows that villagers often provided temple burials for dead pilgrims and made efforts to contact the deceased's relatives, which, in the event that paying relatives were found, was a somewhat profitable custom. However, as mentioned above the dispute was just as much related to territorial squabbling between these rival groups as it was about securing sources of income.

²⁰⁹ Bernstein, "Whose Fuji?" 67.

²¹⁰ Bernstein, "Whose Fuji?" 65.

temples, in Mount Fuji's case sacred land was now also a national emblem.²¹¹ Groups such as the All Japan Tourism Association and the Japan Nature Preservation Association claimed that it was wrong to privatize the world-famous symbol of Japan, which had been the centerpiece of Fuji-Hakone National Park since 1936, while supporters of Fujisan shrine argued that since the mountain itself was the shrine's object of worship the land ought to belong to the shrine.²¹² To back its claim Fujisan shrine also cited the rulings during the Tokugawa period mentioned above, but the proponents of state ownership of Mount Fuji were backed by a clause in the law separating religion and state which stipulated that the state could retain ownership of any property considered crucial to the public interest.²¹³ These arguments were overshadowed by the mutual fear that if either party won ownership, the other would be barred from the mountain that was now an integral part of both religious and non-religious life.

The initial ruling in 1952 was that Fujisan shrine would be given only a few specific areas of Mount Fuji's summit, namely two sub-shrines and two sacred sources of water, while the rest would remain public land.²¹⁴ However, for the next two decades Fuji became embroiled in a series of reassessments and appeals, during which time the shrine lost even this small portion of the mountain, then eventually regained control once again over the entire area from the eighth station to the peak in 1962.²¹⁵ The end of the

²¹¹ Bernstein, "Whose Fuji?" 73. An early case setting the precedent for Mount Fuji was Mt. Nantai, which the regional committee decided was owned by Futarasan shrine.

²¹² Bernstein, "Whose Fuji?" 73. Supporters of the shrine's right to Mount Fuji highlighted "the fact that the shrine's main hall contained no central items of worship but instead featured doors that opened onto a view of its god body: the mountain itself."

²¹³ Bernstein, "Whose Fuji?" 71.

²¹⁴ Bernstein, "Whose Fuji?" 74.

²¹⁵ Bernstein, "Whose Fuji?" 86.

struggle over Mount Fuji's peak finally came in 1974, when the Japanese Supreme Court turned down the government's appeal of the 1962 decision on the grounds that removing the peak from the hands of Fujisan shrine violated both property rights and religious freedom.²¹⁶ This case and the evidence used for and against Fujisan's claim to Mount Fuji stand as a testament to the complex relationship between Fuji's religious and secular identities, and the problems that have resulted from Fuji's modern transformation to national icon.

The Last Remaining Fuji Worshipers

In the decades that have passed since the debates over Mount Fuji's ownership, tensions between Mount Fuji's secular and religious identities are subsiding as religious activity is continually declining and being replaced by the secular pursuits of mountaineering and tourism. Less than two hundred years ago Mount Fuji's only visitors were Shugendo and Fuji-kō pilgrims, who now make up an ever-shrinking fraction of the millions of climbers who come to the mountain every year to follow the same paths laid out by these earlier pilgrims.²¹⁷ However, in spite of this increasing secularization, several of Mount Fuji's religious traditions have survived and continue to hold an important place in the local culture, maintaining the traditions that were the source of the Western world's initial fascination with the mountain during the Meiji period.

²¹⁶ Bernstein, "Whose Fuji?" 88. It was another 30 years before Fujisan shrine received the deed to this territory, however, as an agreement was never reached regarding whether this area was located in Yamanashi or Shizuoka prefecture. As it reads today, the deed does not specify a fixed address.

²¹⁷ Bernbaum, *Sacred Mountains*, 68.

The town of Fujiyoshida, the starting point of Fuji's northern climbing route, holds a special festival for Mount Fuji's deity at the end of every climbing season.²¹⁸ Two lacquered models of the peak are paraded through the streets, and in the evening people light straw towers arranged in a line on the main street that "burn like red-and-orange geysers of molten lava spewing out of the ground."²¹⁹ The purpose of the ceremony is to invite the gods to travel down the mountain and into Fujiyoshida and dance in these flames.²²⁰ The ceremony takes its origins in a myth about Konohana Sakuya Hime, in which she entered a burning bower to give birth to her son in order to prove her fidelity to her husband.²²¹

The Fuji-kō tradition has also persisted, although in far smaller numbers than at its peak in the early 19th century, with roughly 10 societies left who still make pilgrimages to Fuji's summit every year.²²² Of these remaining Fuji-kō, there are some whose origins can be traced back to the first organizations in Edo and whose members have been involved in the organizations for many generations.²²³ In its modern form, Fuji-kō members follow the traditional practices of purifying themselves before the climb, donning white clothes to symbolize their ritual death and rebirth, and circumambulating the crater rim at Fuji's peak after worshipping at the shrine of

²¹⁸ Bernbaum, *Sacred Mountains*, 65.

²¹⁹ Bernbaum, *Sacred Mountains*, 65.

²²⁰ Bernbaum, *Sacred Mountains*, 65.

²²¹ Bernbaum, *Sacred Mountains*, 65-66. This myth is generally thought to explain how Konohana became associated with Fuji, as it predates her association with the mountain. Because she was able to emerge from the burning bower unscathed, she was also believed to have the power to protect her followers from the flames of the volcano.

²²² Bernbaum, *Sacred Mountains*, 66.

²²³ Earhart, *Mount Fuji*, 135.

Konohana Sakuya Hime.²²⁴ Modern changes to these practices include the Fuji-kō members' assistance in the maintenance of local Shinto shrines, the sponsoring of public ceremonies, and the use of a bus to carry pilgrims halfway up the mountain before completing the rest of the journey on foot.²²⁵

A Place in World Heritage: Mount Fuji's UNESCO Inscription

Mount Fuji's induction into the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites in 2013 provides a glimpse of its contemporary identity. Fuji was admitted on the basis of criteria (iii) and (vi), the former being that it must "bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition," the latter that it "be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance."²²⁶ These criteria were determined to be justified on the grounds that "Fujisan is an exceptional testimony to a living cultural tradition centered on mountains," and "that early 19th century prints of Fujisan had a profound impact on the development of Western art and allowed the form of Fujisan to be known around large parts of the world."²²⁷ Mount Fuji's regard as a cultural icon is further signified by the fact that criterion (vii), "to contain superlative natural phenomena or

²²⁴ Bernbaum, *Sacred Mountains*, 66-67.

²²⁵ Bernbaum, *Sacred Mountains*, 66-67. For a more detailed account of a contemporary Fuji-kō pilgrimage, see Earhart, *Mount Fuji* 137-142.

²²⁶ UNESCO, *Advisory Body Evaluation: Fujisan (Japan) No 1417*, UNESCO World Heritage Center, 2013, http://whc.unesco.org/archive/advisory_body_evaluation/1418.pdf (accessed 21 March 2014), 131.

²²⁷ UNESCO, *Advisory Body Evaluation*, 131.

areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance,” is not mentioned in either Fuji’s nomination for inscription or on the final evaluation report.²²⁸

This is a strange exclusion given that it was Mount Fuji’s exceptional natural beauty that originally made it the focus of these traditions, but it is indicative of how the mountain’s reputation and cultural history have far surpassed the significance of its physical appearance. Looking back to Hiroshige’s *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo*, we see Mount Fuji as a mountain whose primary function was as a mysterious aesthetic object to be viewed and contemplated, and whose only visitors were those willing to face its dangers for the pursuit of spiritual renewal and enlightenment. Since Japan’s rapid modernization under the Meiji government this function has shifted to being an international symbol of Japanese heritage, a symbol which the Japanese people had to reclaim for themselves from the West. Bearing the marks of its sacred past in the form of hiking paths, shrines, and pilgrims’ huts, Fuji now encapsulates the history of Japan’s diverse religions, meriting the statement that Fuji is no less an idea than a mountain.²²⁹

²²⁸ UNESCO, *The Criteria for Selection*, UNESCO World Heritage Center, 2005, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/criteria/> (accessed 21 March 2014).

²²⁹ Tyler, “A Glimpse of Mt. Fuji,” 144.

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BIOGRAPHY

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