5. CREATIVE GEOGRAPHY AND VOLCANIC MOUNTAINS: ARNOLD FANCK'S *DIE TOCHTER DES SAMURAI* (1937) AS MOUNTAIN FILM

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When the opportunity arose for the internationally known *Bergfilm* director Arnold Fanck to make a Japanese-German coproduction, he capitalized thematically and dramatically on Japan's numerous volcanoes, some of which were active during his eighteen-month sojourn in the country. Fuji, the icon of Japan, is not the only volcano featured in *Die Tochter des Samurai* (*The Samurai's Daughter*, 1937). In fact, a few other volcanoes in Japan—Mt. Aso, Mt. Asama, and Mt. Yake—play equally important roles, but Fanck depicted these volcanoes without naming them explicitly. Thus, there is some confusion among scholars over the identity of the mountain on which Fanck shot his climactic chase sequence.[1] The confusion results from Fanck's creative geography and his free combination of footage from different volcanoes. Hayashi Bunzaburo, who was the Berlin contact for Kawakita Nagamasa, the producer of the film, and participated in the co-production as translator and supervisor for Fanck's version, defended Fanck's "geographic artificiality" on aesthetic grounds: "there is just too much great scenery in Japan" (Haukamp 2021, 42, 145).

Despite the attention that Fanck lavished on Japan's mountainous landscape, *Die Tochter des Samurai* is not usually regarded as one of his mountain films. The reason may very well lie in the fact that no action in the film takes place on a mountain until the chase sequence, unlike in Fanck's European mountain films, where most of the storyline unfolds on the peaks. However, owing to Fanck's avid editing, the mountains are always present and portending.

Building on other studies on the orientalist and fascist ideology of this film, this essay focuses on the aesthetic and technical construction of *Die Tochter des Samurai* as a *Bergfilm*, which has generally been neglected in scholarship so far. To be sure, Valerie Weinstein has discussed the thematic and aesthetic continuities between *Die Tochter des Samurai* and Fanck's earlier Alpine pictures. She identifies the generic conventions of the *Bergfilm* in *Die Tochter des Samurai* and demonstrates how Fanck inserts Japan and Japanese characters into an internationally recognized generic framework. But whereas Weinstein focuses on the chiral, seemingly alike yet subtly different experiences of modernity for Germans and Japanese that explain the film's transnational appeal to both audiences in the mid-1930s, my essay offers a film historical and film aesthetic analysis of Fanck's creative geography, paying special attention to the nationalist, allegorical, and religious perceptions of the mountains.

This essay teases out the aesthetic details that can make viewers more conscious of the material conditions of the film's production. Incorporating information from the memoirs of Fanck and the cameraman Richard Angst, the essay attempts to reconstruct and clarify where in *Die Tochter des Samurai* Fanck utilized footage shot at four volcanoes: Mt. Fuji, Mt. Asama, Mt. Aso, and Mt. Yake. The identification of the origin of those shots demonstrates how this *Bergfilm*'s narrative and characterization of the protagonists necessitated the conflation of various volcanoes: Although Fuji is the iconic Japanese volcano, it is inactive, and the film crew was compelled to seek active volcanoes to represent the volatile Mitsuko, who, as described by her German teacher, is serene outside and volcanic inside. The essay demonstrates that Fanck closely associates Teruo with Mt. Fuji and Mitsuko with a synthetic volcano consisting of Mt. Aso, Mt. Asama, and Mt. Yake.

Heimkehr, Re-Japanization, and Fuji as a Nationalist and Allegorical Mountain

Right at the beginning of the film, to the accompaniment of Japanese drum and flute music, a *Japonisme* gouache painting of Mt. Fuji and then another gouache painting of a house in the foothills of Fuji are shown while the credits roll. Next, an aerial view of a model of the islands of Japan with a few pockets of rising smoke is seen. This trick shot is the only depiction of Fuji emitting smoke in the film (Hansen 1997, 18). Fanck originally intended to depict a more volatile Fuji that would erupt. The cameraman Richard Angst, in his unpublished memoir, wrote about a huge model of Japan that was constructed in the special-effects studio. The team built a miniature of the still active volcano Mt. Asama[2] and a giant, 8-meter-high device that allowed vertical camera movement. The construction, however, collapsed and the artificial volcanic eruption did not materialize (Angst, Chapter 8, 5).

From his predeparture research, Fanck learned that there were "only two active volcanoes left in Japan": Mt. Aso, which erupts once every few years, and Mt. Asama, which erupts once a year (Fanck 1973, 345; my translation). Since no one could precisely predict when Asama would erupt, Fanck sent two Japanese cameramen to wait for the eruption soon after his team arrived in Japan in January 1936, before the script had even been written. He gave them his third camera, plus a teleobjective with a 600-millimeter focal range. The two Japanese cameramen stayed in a very primitive mountain hut about five kilometers away from the Asama crater. They waited dutifully from February to mid-July, when Asama finally erupted. Fanck interpolated extensive footage of a progressing volcanic eruption of Mt. Asama to create a visual parallel to the plotline as it progresses to an emotional eruption.

In the finished film, the opening sequence transitions from the island model to Mt. Asama, from which rises a single column of dark volcanic gases, then to Mt. Yake, as explained below, where hissing steam gushes from fumaroles, and finally back to Mt. Asama, this time seen in eruption. The montage ends with a view of placid, snow-capped Fuji; windblown snow creates the illusion of steam and vapor surrounding the peak. The opening sequence thus gives a glimpse into how Fanck constructed the visuals of the film. These are not gratuitous nature scenes. They not only intimate the way in which Fanck composed the entire film, but also serve to establish the inhospitality of the Japanese islands and the need for new land, a topic central to the film's ideological and political justification of Japan's colonization of Manchuria.

In the episode of Teruo's homecoming and re-Japanization, Mt. Fuji is featured prominently. The accentuation of Mt. Fuji in this episode foregrounds the nativist and nationalist perception of Fuji. In the 1930s, as Japan became more militant and fascist, Mt. Fuji was instrumentalized to support imperialistic propaganda, colonialism, and chauvinism. According to H. Byron Earhart, "The nationalistic or patriotic 'mantra' of Fuji will be encountered during the modern epoch, when Fuji too was pressed into service to shore up essentialist views of Japanese 'naturalism' and ultra-nationalism" (Earhart 2015, 4–5, 126–30). This episode opens with Teruo's sister chirpily whistling, obviously happy that she has reawakened the "blood of [his] ancestors" within Teruo. Then the scene cuts to a tracking shot of Fuji that gives us Teruo's perspective from the train. In a long take, the train itself is seen through a screen of cherry blossoms framed against the backdrop of Fuji and of two figures poling *hozugawa ayubune* (traditional Japanese riverboats). Next, Teruo emerges from the left side of the screen, appearing for the first time in a kimono. The camera pans quickly to the right to aim at Fuji. Teruo walks into the scene and pauses, apparently to dwell on the grandeur of Fuji. It cuts to a panoramic shot of a distant Fuji under a vast sky, then cuts back to Teruo, followed by a point-of-view shot of Fuji, with the camera placed behind cherry blossoms again.

The next day begins with a landscape shot of the snowy cap of Mt. Fuji. Then Teruo, asleep on a tatami, is superimposed in double exposure onto a shot of Fuji to suggest that he is sleeping at the foot of the mountain (Figure 5.1). In this fabricated shot, the walls of the parental house become transparent so that Teruo blends into nature and is embraced by Fuji. While on the aesthetic level Fanck creates a visually intriguing shot, on the narrative level this shot is embedded in Teruo's re-Japanization and re-nationalization, thus accentuating yet again the nationalist and allegorical signification of Fuji. Fanck then fades to a close-up of the resting Teruo looking resolutely toward his new life in Japan, hands folded behind his head. The shot dissolves to show a fishnet outside the window with Fuji visible in the background, and then a lake near Fuji, probably the famous Lake Kawaguchiko, which is the most easily accessible of the Fuji Five Lakes, with waves rushing to the lakeshore. This episode shows Teruo re-embracing his native culture and re-evaluating life as a farmer; its depiction of him picking up a pitchfork and going to the rice field anticipates his eventual agricultural life in Manchukuo, Japan's colony in China.

Figure 5.1 Teruo's parental house and Mt. Fuji are conflated in *Die Tochter des Samurai* (1937)

Mt. Aso "within Sight" and Mt. Asama "within Earshot"

Whereas Teruo's biological parents, the Kandas, live at the foot of Mt. Fuji, the Yamatos live near a different, unidentified volcano, and from their residence they can sense its rumblings and see it from Mitsuko's window (Figure 5.2 left). This shot recalls a similar shot in *Der heilige Berg* (*The Holy Mountain*, Arnold Fanck, 1926) where the dancer Diotima, played by Leni Riefenstahl, rushes to the window to look at the distant icy mountain to which "the friend" escapes to savor his overwhelming feelings for her (Figure 5.2 right). This detail illustrates how easily Fanck transferred motifs from his mountain films to his "volcano film."

When viewers first met Mitsuko at her residence earlier, however, there was no volcano in sight. That sequence was primarily shot in Miyajima in Hiroshima Bay, where the giant orange Great Torii Gate, the landmark entrance to the Itsukushima Shrine, stands in the water (Haukamp 2021, 63; see also Angst, Chapter 8, 3–4). A viewer unfamiliar with the geography of Japan is led to conclude that the Yamato family lives near a volcano. Fanck obviously sacrificed dramaturgical consistency in the interest of a dramatic narrative: The volcano's rumbling should be audible from Mitsuko's home so that she could hear it "calling" to her. Mitsuko's father, Iwao Yamato, has invited Gerda to be a guest at his house. Mitsuko's German teacher has also come to give her German lessons. He tells his compatriot Gerda that Japanese women have a volcanic temperament and they either erupt like a volcano or leap into one—a clear indication of Fanck's intention to use the volcano as an allegory. These words are immediately followed by a shot of a crater, out of which voluminous incandescent clouds of vapor rise while the camera climbs upward to the left (Figure 5.3 left). An immediate question arises: At which volcano was this shot filmed? And which volcano do we see from Mitsuko's window?

Figure 5.2 Mountain views through a window in *Die Tochter des Samurai* (1937) and in *Der heilige Berg* (1926)

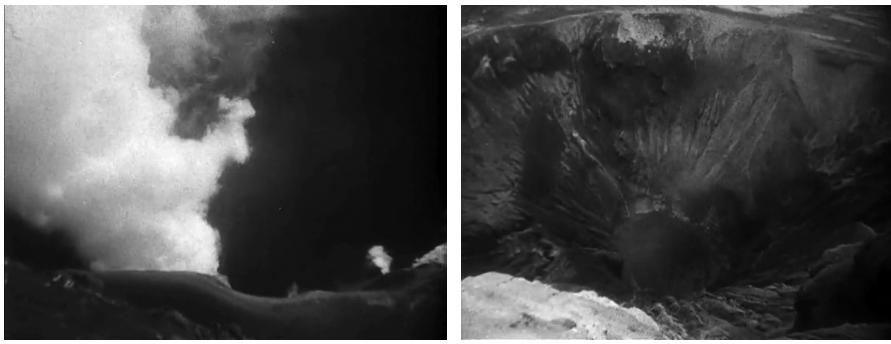

Figure 5.3 Crater shot of Mt. Aso and of the Mt. Yake crater in *Die Tochter des Samurai* (1937)

This tracking shot moving upward along the volcano matches what Richard Angst described in his memoir.[3]

> —One day we had to film a still active volcano—this uncanny natural phenomenon should be captured as truthfully as possible—in order to achieve this, I let myself be rappelled down into the inside of the volcano together with my camera—the hot sulphur fumes from the rock cracks and from the volcano constantly hit my face—it was really a dicey task, because I could not speak for two weeks as a result of these fumes—the Japanese side was amazed at the courage I had to muster, but they could not understand why anyone would risk his life for the film—they will be images that Europe has not yet been able to see—maybe this is where the great value of this film lies.

The fact that Angst mentioned rappelling down while the film clip shows an upward camera movement may indicate that Fanck played the film backward, or that it was shot when Angst roped back up the volcano. In any case, this shot reflected Angst's position in the fuming volcano with his camera. But Angst did not mention which volcano it was.

Luckily, Fanck wrote in his memoir that his film team went to Mt. Aso: "Although Richard Angst was able to take a stunning shot in the vast but barren landscape of Aso, looking into the faintly smoking crater, for Teruo's pursuit of Mitsuko there was not a single beautiful shot" (Fanck 1973, 346). Fanck did not mention where in *Die Tochter des Samurai* he used Angst's amazing shot. One could, however, safely assume that Fanck would not leave such a shot unused. Now, in light of Angst's own memoir, it can be concluded with certainty that Fanck placed this "stunning shot" right after Mitsuko's German teacher foreshadowed the manner in which Mitsuko

plans to end her life. The visual of this volcano also excludes the possibility that it is Fuji, Asama, or Yake. As the film shows later, the crater on Mt. Yake does not emit a white column of steam (Figure 5.3 right). Furthermore, Angst did not go to Asama, and Fanck only sent two Japanese cameramen there. This leaves Mt. Aso as the only possible candidate for the volcano that is located within the film near the Yamato residence, and the volcano's appearance also matches that of the actual Aso. Moreover, Mt. Aso is located on the island of Kyushu, the southernmost of Japan's large islands, and Angst mentioned in his memoir that the film team traveled the full length of the island.[4]

> …, and not until location shooting was it possible for me to see some of Japan, its life, its customs and traditions—we went to the southern tip of the Japanese island, to the romantic Hiroshima, where the atomic bomb was dropped on August 6, 1945,—to the Japanese Alps, to Sakhalin, we saw really everything there was to see.

Therefore, it was not too far-fetched for James King to write that Mitsuko plans to jump into Mt. Aso (King 2012, 20).

Unaware of Teruo's change of heart, Mitsuko reluctantly comes out to meet the two guests. Speaking to Gerda, Mitsuko ominously implies that on the following day she may wear the wedding kimono for once in her lifetime. At the same moment, the rumble of an imminent volcanic eruption startles Gerda. Then a single columnar cloud of volcanic ash and sulphurous gases pours from a vent, illustrated using footage of Mt. Asama (Figure 5.4). The scene cuts to Teruo driving to the family council meeting that will decide whether to dissolve his adoptive relationship after his refusal to marry Mitsuko. While Mr. Yamato and Gerda are eating a meal served by Mitsuko, the rumbling of the volcano is combined with a shot of a trembling vase. Whereas Gerda looks anxious, Mitsuko lowers her eyes, sensing it is time for her to head to the volcano. A close-up of a pillar of rising volcanic smoke from Mt. Asama is inserted, as well as another shot of Teruo driving. Thus, in the episode at the Yamatos, Fanck used the sound recorded from Mt. Asama, while the volcano visible from Mitsuko's window is Mt. Aso.

As the meal continues, a more persistent rumbling is now audible. Mitsuko has already quietly retreated to her room. Gerda tells the calm Yamato, who is undisturbed by the volcano, that she finds the volcano "a little scary" ("ein bisschen unheimlich"). Now the shot is not merely a plume of white volcanic gases but includes black ashes, with incandescent steam and gases pervading the screen. After the scene of Yamato and Gerda standing at the cliff overlooking the ocean, the film cuts to Teruo driving and Gerda arriving at the same crossing by car. But Teruo does not see Gerda, as he did not see Mitsuko

Figure 5.4 Eruption of Mt. Asama in *Die Tochter des Samurai* (1937)

earlier in the Hotel Europa in Tokyo. The missed encounters indirectly express the change in Teruo's love interest. But it would be hard for Teruo not to see Gerda, since she was the only person on the road. Here the legendary "Fanck luck" ("Fancksche[r] Dusel," Fanck 1973, 345) struck again: Out of the blue, a group of Buddhist nuns whom Fanck had actually met the day before in the hotel's sauna walked down the road in white robes, beating pellet drums with a wooden handle. Fanck took advantage of this coincidence by having the nuns block Teruo's view of Gerda on the other side of the street (Fanck 1973, 348–49).

Mitsuko first looks at the *shoji* (sliding door) behind which the family council is convening. Another shot of the plume of smoke on Mt. Asama ensues, followed by the window shot with Mt. Aso in view. Then the scene cuts to the suicide note Mitsuko leaves behind, in which she compares herself to tender cherry blossoms and Gerda to the thronging fruit that replaces the withered and fallen blossoms. Echoing Mitsuko's words, cherry blossoms are seen falling into the water, and then Mitsuko herself heads to the volcano in a drawn-out sequence. It is the *hanami* season and the Japanese are shown enjoying the beauty of cherry blossoms. From the soundtrack comes a sweet voice singing the famous folk song "Sakura, Sakura" as Mitsuko encounters

a little girl. Fanck seems in no hurry to advance the plot: He creates scenic tableaus of disjointed images or breaks up a scene by inserting ethnographical, documentary-style images about life in Japan. This is understandable since *Die Tochter des Samurai* was also a propagandistic and ethnographical *Kulturfilm* that was meant to showcase Japan for an international audience.

Finally, Mitsuko looks up, presumably at the smouldering volcano near her home, Mt. Aso, which is, however, illustrated by a shot of Mt. Asama with more dense clouds of fumes. After Mitsuko boards the train, viewers see another shot of Asama before she exits the train and heads toward the mountain. Teruo arrives to find the note Mitsuko has left behind and realizes Mitsuko's self-destructive plan. A point-of-view window shot of Mt. Aso from Teruo's perspective repeats an earlier point-of-view window shot of Aso from Mitsuko's perspective. It is followed by a plume of dark sulphur gas on Mt. Asama, with Mitsuko's non-diegetic whisper to Teruo: "Teruo … the volcano. I hear the volcano. The volcano is so close" ("Teruo … der Vulkan. Ich höre den Vulkan. Der Vulkan ist so nah").

The Chase on Mt. Yake

Although shots of Mt. Asama's escalating activity signal the pending outbreak before Mitsuko's departure, the shots that record her ascent no longer show a plume of thick black smoke but instead the anti-climactic emission of steam and gases from fumaroles. In fact, the climbing sequence was shot on a different volcano, a choice that guaranteed a realistic depiction of climbing an active volcano and at the same time ensured the safety of actors and film crew. Neither Asama's "monotonous volcanic cone of ejected ash" nor Aso's "barren landscape" could produce the aesthetic effect Fanck desired for his climactic chase sequence (Fanck 1973, 346). But the "Fanck luck" did not abandon him. In a store, by chance, he saw a postcard with a distant view of a mountain topped by small clouds. It immediately occurred to him that they could be volcanic gas. The mountain was Mt. Yake, literally "Burning Mountain," an active volcano near Matsumoto, Nagano, in the Northern Japanese Alps. Mt. Yake was not well known then, but it had a grand hotel at an altitude of 1,500 meters where Fanck and his team stayed while filming the crucial sequence (Fanck 1973, 346).[5] The serendipitous discovery of Mt. Yake was a breakthrough for the film project:

> Sulphurous fumes raged from hundreds and thousands of holes in this wildly torn lava rock—from small holes, making a shrill whistling, as well as from huge holes, up to two meters in diameter, with such a roar that we had to shout into each other's ears in order to be heard. Everywhere a fuming hell—I could have shouted with joy for having

> found such a grandiose landscape. After all, now I could also make something sensational out of my volcano plot, something that had never been seen before in film. (Fanck 1973, 346)

The shots on Mt. Yake are spectacular and breathtaking, showing the delicate, graceful Mitsuko, wearing a kimono and carrying her wedding kimono in a bundle, surrounded by barren trees and hot gases billowing out of holes in the ground. With an *onsen* (hot spring) visible behind her, Mitsuko pauses to look ahead, and a point-of-view shot of thick smoke rolling out of the vent on Mt. Asama follows. As illustrated above, Aso, Asama, and Yake are creatively synthesized to construct the volcano that Mitsuko intends to throw herself into.

Fanck repeatedly cuts between Mitsuko climbing and Teruo driving to the volcano. The camera placed on the edges of the car captures Teruo from different angles and illustrates the dangerous terrain that he drives through: a narrow, elevated path on the edge of a steep slope. The path apparently winds along the Azusa River; when Mt. Yake last erupted in 1915, the volcanic mudflow blocked the flow of the river and created Taisho Pond in Kamikochi ("Mt. Yake-dake," n.d.). Here Teruo's car breaks down and he prepares to swim across the pond. The camera films a succession of close-ups of dead trees, then pans left to show a leafless forest in the pond. The sequence is interspersed with shots of Mt. Yake, veritably a "burning mountain" (Figure 5.5). The desiccated trees in and around the pond add a special ambience to the scene and serve as a reminder of the destruction wrought by volcanic activity. When the film was made, about twenty years after the pond was formed, there was still a dense mass of decayed trees in the pond. The film became a rare historical document of the condition of the pond in 1936. Since the pond was filled with river water, Teruo could swim in it, but the hotbed underneath the lake generated steam and mist that floated above the water, creating unique scenes of Teruo, fully dressed, swimming, and resting on the dead tree trunks. Even today, a few submerged trees can be seen in the pond.

The camera tracks Teruo from different angles, capturing how he reaches shore and crashes due to exhaustion, and then immediately pans left to capture the fumaroles gushing out steam. While Mitsuko climbs Mt. Yake slowly, via an easier path, Teruo hurriedly scales a shorter but steeper route on the other side of the mountain to reach her in time (Fanck 1973, 346). He has to scamper because of the hot ground and, while climbing, his socks are burned by the scorching rocks and fumaroles. The two protagonists are often seen enshrouded in thick volcanic vapor. This rescue sequence aligns *Die Tochter des Samurai* most obviously with the pathos of Fanck's earlier mountain films: The protagonists exhibit consuming passion, deadly love, superior courage, and loyal heroism while mountaineering.

Figure 5.5 The fuming Mt. Yake in *Die Tochter des Samurai* (1937)

Fanck wrote about the scorching conditions of filming on Mt. Yake or, in his German spelling, Jackedacke:

> The ground was at places very hot and caved in for a few centimeters with a crackling sound, so that my people, above all the Japanese, were taken aback at first, afraid of stepping into this hell and breaking through down into the fire. Fortunately, I was a geologist and could laugh at them for such an impossible idea. Anyhow, my little Hara almost burnt her feet in her Japanese sandals, when she once broke through a few centimeters in the hot rock crust. Therefore I immediately had asbestos sandals made for her, and socks of asbestos mesh for Kosugi. (Fanck 1973, 346)

Filming Teruo chasing after Mitsuko, Fanck pursued stunning visuals whose value was primarily aesthetic rather than narrative (Figure 5.6). In another example of aesthetically motivated choices, the camera closes in to show Teruo putting his hand and then his foot next to a fumarole (Figure 5.7).

Fanck remembered the team's high spirits while shooting this sequence on Mt. Yake, exhausting as it was:

Figure 5.6 Teruo chasing after Mitsuko in *Die Tochter des Samurai* (1937)

> Nevertheless, with great enthusiasm we worked up there, aware that something extraordinary was being made here. It was only the endless climbing of about 1,500 meters of altitude difference that we continually cursed—all the more so because most of the time we climbed for no purpose, as the weather tended to change with fiendish frequency at noon. Yet without sunshine these steam columns did not work. (Fanck 1973, 347)

Fanck recalled that they finally had nice weather one day. He set up his camera before two steam columns that were only one meter apart. Hara Setsuko was supposed to walk between them, which he envisioned would yield an unforgettable image. However, he could not find Hara in the viewfinder. It turned out that Hara had abruptly decided to run downhill because the steam column blew up her kimono and revealed her knees. Fanck was in despair about the unnecessarily squandered opportunity, especially because he saw Japanese women in trams with naked legs all the time, and naked mixed-sex saunas were also common in Japan. In fact, he came back to the hotel that afternoon only to find Hara sitting stark naked in the hot tub. Now it was Fanck's turn to be embarrassed for his nudity. Hara however invited Fanck to join her: "Come

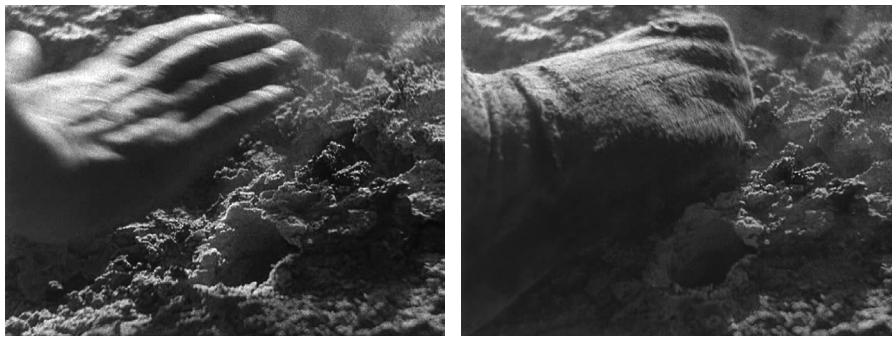

Figure 5.7 Teruo's hand and foot close to a fumarole in *Die Tochter des Samurai* (1937)

on, Dr. Fuancku, why feel embarrassed?" ("Kommen Sie doch, Dr. Fuancku, warum genieren?" Fanck 1973, 347).

In Fanck's earlier mountain films, snowstorms and avalanches were frequently the source of physical danger, but volcanoes posed a different threat. Fanck put his crew right in the middle of gases composed of carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, hydrogen sulphide, and sulphur dioxide. As mentioned earlier, Richard Angst remembered losing his voice for two weeks after inhaling the fumes (see also Bieber 2009, 363). Isamu Kosugi, who plays Teruo, is obviously losing his voice when he repeatedly calls out to Mitsuko. Since every scene had to be shot twice, for Fanck and for Itami Mansaku,[6] Hara was completely exhausted by all of the repeated climbing up and down the mountain. Haukamp mentions a comparison drawn between Leni Riefenstahl and Hara Setsuko by a Japanese reporter named Tsuneo Hazumi: "And indeed, writing about the hardships of shooting on location, a Japanese reporter notes contentedly that 'the Japanese Hara Setsuko does not lose out to [Fanck's mountain film actress] Leni Riefenstahl'" (Haukamp 2021, 130).

In scripting Mitsuko's suicide attempt, Fanck cashed in on a mid-1930s Japanese trend of disappointed lovers committing suicide by throwing themselves into an active volcano. In his memoir, he mentioned that using footage of the eruption of Mt. Asama would not be sufficient for the volcano plot. He wrote that instead, "the samurai's daughter should go up a volcano on account of her wounded honour and plunge herself into a crater, which, by the way, many girls did annually at that time, thus meeting a gruesome end" (Fanck 1973, 345). On May 10, 1932, a Japanese student, Choso Goro, and his girlfriend Yaeko jumped into the volcano on Mt. Sakata in Kanagawa Prefecture because their families opposed their relationship (High 2003, 28; Galvan 2020). The volcano that was most frequently associated with such

suicides was Mt. Mihara, on the island of Izu Oshima. On February 11, 1933, a twenty-one-year-old lesbian student, Kiyoko Matsumoto, threw herself into the crater of Mt. Mihara because lesbian relationships were taboo in Japan at the time. Her action started a suicide epidemic in Japan: In 1933 alone, 944 people (804 men, 140 women) jumped into the crater. In the following two years, another 350 suicides and 1,386 suicide attempts on Mt. Mihara were recorded, and the place even became a tourist attraction ("The Volcano Suicides," 2016). The suicide wave peaked in 1936, with 619 people dying in this fashion. From 1932 to 1937, over 2,000 young Japanese chose to end their lives in this volcano:

> The sulphurous pit of Mt. Mihara, on "Suicide Island," is still, despite elaborate precautions, the mecca today of despondent lovers in Japan. Police at the docks in Tokyo have increased their vigilance and a barricade has been erected around the pit itself but the suicides continue. There were 619 last year … . There have been more than 2,000 suicides in Mt. Mihara's smoking pit in the last six years. ("Japan's 'Suicide Island' Popular," 1937)

In a forest grove midway up the peak of Mt. Mihara, Buddhists erected a series of statues of the *bosatsu* (bodhisattva) Jizo as memorials to the lives lost ("Spooky Izu" n.d.). The association of the cult of Jizo with suicide by volcano makes Fanck's decision to include Buddhist iconography in his depiction of Mitsuko's suicide attempt seem coherent and justified.

Buddhist Iconography from Unknown Mountains and the Eruption of Mt. Asama

As Mitsuko prepares to jump into the crater, scenes of her on the crater's rim are intercut with a succession of elusive and surreal Buddhist images under the gray and sulphurous sky. In Japan, *kami* (divinities) are believed to dwell in the sacred or *kannabi* mountains (the term *kannabi* refers to a revered natural phenomenon such as a sacred forest or mountain), and therefore pilgrims, often white-clad, climb to the summit and perform rituals along the way (Yano 2008). Earhart, a specialist on *sangaku shinko* (the Japanese mountain creed), writes, "[C]limbing a sacred mountain was analogous to passing from hell to heaven, from profane to sacred" (Earhart 2015, 8n16). It is apparent that Fanck associates Mitsuko's choice of death with her assumed Buddhist and Shintoist enculturation. I argue that the apparitions of Buddhist demons and deities that visit Mitsuko near the edge of the volcano represent her mental and psychological projections and her gradual acceptance of death as religious deliverance.

When Mitsuko arrives at the rim of the crater, a horned demon, or *oni*, appears out of the smoke and vapor, accompanied by enchanting orchestral music in the soundtrack (Figure 5.8). A similar image of an *oni* appears on the cover of "How to See Beppu," a visitor's guide published in 1935 (Figure 5.9). An *oni* is a warden of *jigoku* (Hell), sent by Enma to fetch the living ("Oni," n.d.; "Children's Parody," n.d.). An image of Enma himself appears next in the right foreground of the frame; he is balanced by the silhouette of a Buddha with a spiky corona in the distance. The corona identifies this figure as Amida Buddha, who leads the souls of the dead to the Pure Land. The split mise-en-scène places Amida in the light and Enma in the dark (Figure 5.10).

The next Buddhist-themed image shows Amida with the *bosatsu* Jizo on the left, looking up to him (Figure 5.11). Jizo is closely associated with Amida Buddha and sometimes attends him as he escorts the pious to the Western Paradise ("Jizō Bosatsu," n.d.). As a *bosatsu*, Jizo is one who has achieved enlightenment but has postponed his nirvana or Buddhahood so that he can devote himself to aiding humans, and his cult has existed for many centuries in Japan. He is known as the bodhisattva of compassion and mercy, a savior who delivers the greatest sinners from Hell (Graham

Figure 5.8 Horned devil holding a noose in *Die Tochter des Samurai* (1937)

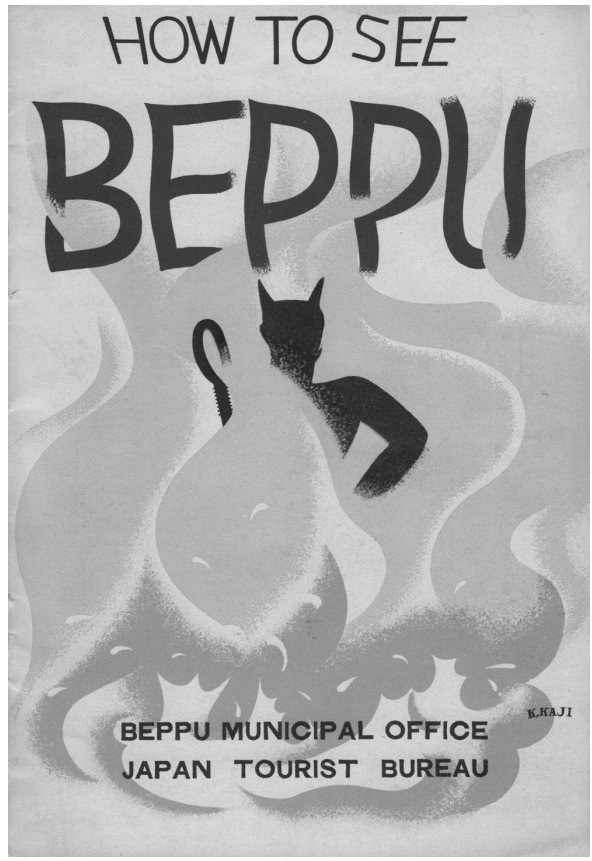

Figure 5.9 Cover of the tourist guide "How to See Beppu," Beppu Municipal Office 1935

2007, 98; Trainor 2001, 116). It makes sense that Mitsuko would see or imagine seeing this savior and guardian figure just as she is struggling with the decision to end her life.

After shots of hellish, devouring, and engulfing smoke taken from Mt. Asama, the sequence of Buddhist apparitions ends with a close-up of Amida (Figure 5.12). In Fanck's film, the succession of Buddhist iconographical images progresses from the malignant-looking harbinger of death to the *bosatsu* Jizo and Buddha, revealed gradually between shots of rising smoke and bubbling lava. On closer scrutiny, this sequence of phantoms expresses Mitsuko's psychological and mental state as she prepares for death. At first, she is frightened and hesitates. Then she gradually calms down and reconciles herself to jumping to her death. The appearance of Jizo, who guides the dead out of the

Figure 5.10 Buddha juxtaposed with Enma, King of Hell, in *Die Tochter des Samurai* (1937)

Figure 5.11 Amida Buddha accompanied by the *bosatsu* Jizo in *Die Tochter des Samurai* (1937)

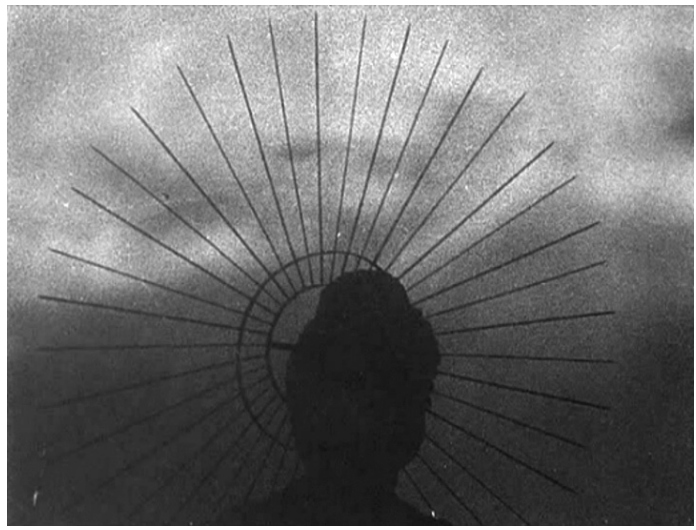

Figure 5.12 A close-up of Buddha with a spiky corona in *Die Tochter des Samurai* (1937)

underworld, seems to comfort her. The series of Buddhist images represents her gradual acceptance of death, which she comes to view as an opportunity for spiritual redemption. Fanck takes geographic liberty with these Buddhist statues, as he did with his shots of volcanoes. It is unclear where he filmed these various shots since Japan boasts many mountains that have Shinto shrines, Buddhist temples, and religious monuments, such as Ontake, Aso, Mihara, Hakusan, Chokaisan, Gassan, Kurikomayama, Tateyama, Myoko, Mitake, and Daisen (Yano 2008, 4). Fanck has obviously attached religious significance to the volcanic mountains: The mountains are not only beautiful, treacherous, and inviting, but also sublime, mystical, and sacred.

Just as Mitsuko, who is by now reconciled with death, puts on her wedding kimono, Teruo reaches her and gently touches her shoulder. Here Fanck made an error with costumes. Mitsuko wears a dark-trimmed kimono with a floral pattern while climbing. When she puts on the wedding kimono, she is still wearing the same kimono underneath. However, when she turns around to face Teruo, notices his feet, kneels, and uses the wedding kimono to cuddle them, she is wearing a white kimono (Figure 5.13). Obviously, this scene was shot on a different day. Interestingly, when Teruo carries her downhill, she is again wearing the dark-striped floral kimono. It is clear that the scene where she subserviently kneels to care for Teruo's feet was added.

At that moment, an explosive eruption occurs: Viscous clots of magma are hurled into the air; thick volcanic ash plumes roll up; fire spews from

Figure 5.13 Mitsuko wearing her wedding kimono in *Die Tochter des Samurai* (1937)

the volcanic opening; the "Taisho Pond" effervesces; and debris shoots into the nearby "Taisho Pond" filled with dead trees, which is obviously not the real Taisho Pond near Mt. Yake. Instead, the two Japanese cameramen awaiting the eruption of Mt. Asama had turned on their cameras at the instant when it erupted. Fanck wrote in his memoir: "The two sat ironclad from February till mid-July—then the eruption happened! They filmed in the same second. Even had the 'Fanck luck' that the gigantic cloud was illuminated with back light—the footage was splendid" (Fanck 1973, 345). The telephoto lens provided by Fanck enabled them to capture Asama's eruption in close-up. Fanck noted, "To my knowledge it was the first time that anyone succeeded in filming a large volcanic eruption" (Fanck 1973, 345). Cross-cutting between footage of Yake and Asama makes viewers think that the lovers barely escaped from being engulfed in the inferno. Fanck uses double exposures, superimposing images from Asama onto those of Yake, or vice versa, to create the illusion that Teruo is carrying Mitsuko downhill while the volcano is erupting. Furthermore, Fanck adds a third layer to this sequence, namely, a triple exposure that shows an unconscious Teruo, asleep after his ordeal, restlessly dreaming of his escape from the volcano while carrying Mitsuko to safety, and of looking at Mitsuko resting on a tatami and stroking her (Figure 5.14).

Figure 5.14 A triple exposure rendering Teruo dreaming of the rescue in *Die Tochter des Samurai* (1937)

Conclusion

Although the plot of *Die Tochter des Samurai* is not bound to a mountainous setting to the same extent as in Fanck's earlier Alpine pictures, mountains are constantly present. In fact, Fanck applies the hallmarks of his Alpine pictures to the Japanese material, replacing ice with fire. He cuts freely and frequently from one volcano to another, in a way that is barely noticed by the audience. Due to their distinct visual profiles and physical characteristics, each volcano serves a specific function and advances the plot in its own way. On the artistic level, Fanck's syncretic use of creative geography produced a visually appealing mountain film. In order to represent Mitsuko allegorically as a volcano—a seemingly calm appearance concealing unexpected force—Fanck combines Mt. Aso, Mt. Asama, and Mt. Yake into one fictional volcano that Mitsuko would leap into. The merging of two mountain sequences, especially—of rescue on Mt. Yake and of eruption on Mt. Asama—creates a suspenseful storyline and the illusion of simultaneity and co-locality. The inconspicuous blending of mountains allowed Fanck to transcend temporal and spatial limits and to maximize the aesthetic, ethnographic, and dramatic potency of the Japanese landscape.

On the ideological level, Mt. Fuji embodies nationalistic pride and is visually linked to Teruo's repatriation and re-immersion in his native culture. To this end, Fanck drew on Buddhist iconography as a reservoir of visual images that communicate Japaneseness, and he infused his representation of Buddhism and Shintoism with Nazi-compatible ideology. In the much-discussed sequence at the Shinto temple, Fanck exploited the Buddhist use of swastikas and turned a Shinto priest into a propagandist who convinced Teruo to reject Western ideas of individual choice in favor of traditional Japanese values. These traditional values negate the self in service of the nation and the people, which concurred with National Socialist values. Teruo's rekindled affection for his Japanese bride is concomitant with his regained patriotism. Therefore, the athletic mountaineering by which he professes his reawakened love is likewise predicated on his acceptance of individual subordination to the nation's expansion and militarization. When Fanck called *Die Tochter des Samurai* "the most beautiful film" he ever made in his 1973 memoir (363), he was still oblivious to the ideological problematics the film entails. His memoir revealed that he showed little understanding for the postwar criticism of his film as nationalist and fascist. His arguments that audiences loved the film and that contemporary critics raved about it in the late 1930s sound hollow.

Notes

1. James King wrote that Mitsuko tries to kill herself by jumping into the crater of Mt. Aso (King 2012, 20). Karl Sierek claimed that the crater Mitsuko plans to jump into is on Mt. Fuji (Sierek 2018, 307, 311, 312, 350). Others, including Janine Hansen and Valerie Weinstein, did not specify which volcano the female protagonist would leap into (Hansen 1997; Weinstein 2014).
2. Instead of a smoking Mt. Fuji, Angst only mentioned an active Mt. Asama in miniature. Hansen, however, correctly pointed out that the location of the smoking mountain in the model corresponds to Mt. Fuji and not Mt. Asama, which lies 225 km/140 miles to the north, near the center of the island.
3. Angst's memoir is not published, therefore I will provide the German original in this chapter's endnotes. Fanck's memoir is published, and therefore only the English translations will be quoted throughout this chapter.

> —es gallt [sic] eines Tages Aufnahmen von einem noch tätigen Vulkan zu machen—dieses unheimliche Naturereignis sollte möglichst getreu erfasst werden—ich ließ mich, um dies zu erreichen, mit meiner Kamera in das Innere des Vulkans abseilen—aus den Felsritzen und aus dem Vulkan schlugen mir ständig die heissen Schwefeldämpfe ins Gesicht—es war eine nicht ungefährliche Aufnahme, denn 2 Wochen lang konnte ich infolge dieser Dämpfe nicht mehr sprechen—diesen Mut den ich ja aufzubringen hatte, wurde mir mit einem Erstaunen japanischer Seite notiert, doch für den Film sein Leben einzusetzen, dies konnten sie nicht verstehen—es werden Aufnahmen sein, wie sie in Europa noch niemals zu sehen waren—vielleicht liegt darin der grosse Wert dieses Filmwerkes . . .. (Angst, Chapter 8, 6–7)

4. . . ., und mit den Aussenaufnahmen war es mir erstmals möglich, von Japan, seinem Leben, seinen Sitten und Gebräuchen etwas zu sehen—wir fuhren zur Südspitze der japanischen Insel, nach den romantischen Hiroschima, dem Ort wo am 6. August 1945 die Atombombe fiel—in die japanischen Alpen, nach Sachalin, wir haben wirklich alles gesehen was zu sehen war . . .. (Angst, Chapter 8, 5–6).
5. Among scholars who have written on this film, Iris Haukamp, as far as I know, was the first to cite the testimony of Kawakita Kashiko, the wife of the Japanese producer, who mentioned that the climactic rescue scene was filmed on Mt. Yake (Haukamp 2021, 1).
6. It is well-known that, due to artistic and ideological differences between Fanck and the Japanese director Itami, the first major German-Japanese co-production yielded two different versions (Shen 2022).

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