

Sacred mountains and environmental conservation: A practitioner's
workshop

The Mountain Institute

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Table of Contents

Foreword

Introduction

Workshop Topics

1. Common Sacred Mountain Themes

Religions of Survival

The Maori Legend of Taranaki, Mountain in Exile

2. The Linkage Between Sacred Mountains, Culture, and Conservation

2.1 Sacred Mountains and Culture

Pilgrimage and Conservation in the Himalaya

2.2 Sacred Mountains and Environmental Conservation

Sacred Groves in Ghana

3. Challenges, Issues and Threats

4. Recommendations and Guidelines

4.1 Policy Recommendations

4.2 Research Recommendations

4.3 Education and Outreach—Recommendations and Guidelines

Educational Content of Outreach Programs

4.4 Recommended Action Programs

Appendix A

Meeting Process Summary

Appendix B

Commitments

Meeting Participants

TMI Supporting Staff

Foreword

Inspirational to all, mountains are sacred to over one billion people. In mountain regions through out the world, traditional cultures and conservation have evolved together over the ages. Sustainable natural resource management is driven by the beliefs and behaviors of human communities, and local cultures are strengthened by their intimate connections to the natural environment that sustains them. Healthy mountain ecosystems, communities, and cultures are inseparable, building over time what one workshop participant termed a "visceral vocabulary of place" where sacred beliefs are inextricably bound to the routines of daily life and the practice of natural resource management.

Our modern world is often poorer for the scientific rationalism that treats objective and sacred knowledge as separate spheres. Traditional mountain cultures do not make such distinctions: ritual and religion are intrinsic to the daily business of living.

The Inca culture of Latin America believed mountains to be sacred, and offered human sacrifices on an exceptional basis. There is evidence that this practice was, in some cases, intended to propitiate the mountain gods, and in other cases was done in exchange for taking precious resources such as timber, gold, or silver from the "body" of the god. An economist today would say the Inca placed an exceptionally high marginal cost on the utilization of these resources. In the highly fragile ecosystems of the Andes, long-term survival may well have depended on beliefs that balanced resource use with protection.

Our questions in bringing together this consultation were precisely to ask what might be learned about conservation and sustainable resource use from traditional mountain cultures. Is there an underlying environmental wisdom in these highly place-based cultures? As economic development and integration erodes traditional beliefs, is the loss being incurred simply the price of progress, or are more serious risks involved?

Such questions are not merely academic. They are matters of urgent public policy. In the emerging European Union, citizens of wealthier countries are eyeing land for vacation homes in the remaining pristine mountain forests of the former Eastern bloc; in the U.S., mountaineers argue over climbing rights in areas sacred to Native Americans; and in ranges from the Andes to the Himalaya, roads, mines, timber extraction, and multipurpose dams are planned and developed without reference to local cultures and values.

Our small workshop brought together scholars and faith practitioners, believers, anthropologists, and religious leaders. This report cannot do justice to three days of remarkable and rich discussions. We thank the participants for the care and candor they brought to exchanges that touched on issues of utmost sensitivity. And we thank our partner organizations for their support in making this meeting possible. We confirmed in myriad and often unexpected ways that sacred beliefs are key to environmental sustainability for both mountain cultures and downstream settlements. And we confirmed that we still have much to learn about sacred mountains and sustainability.



D. Jane Pratt, President

The Mountain Institute

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Introduction

From April 15-18, 1998, a working group of 12 individuals from around the world gathered to discuss the implications of sacred mountains, sacred sites in mountains, and the cultural beliefs of mountain communities for sustainable mountain development, environmental conservation, and cultural advancement. The Mountain Institute planned, developed, and implemented this workshop with important funding and assistance from United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization; United Nations Environment Programme; and Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

The sacred significance of mountains, long recognized by mountain people, was agreed upon and established as an important priority at the 1992 Earth Summit. This is reflected in Agenda 21, Chapter 13, "Managing Fragile Ecosystems: Sustainable Mountain Development," as well as the subsequent NGO Consultation on the Mountain Agenda (Lima, 1995). The participants at the Lima Consultation established "Sacred, Spiritual, and Symbolic Significance of Mountains" as one of nine thematic priorities for the global Mountain Agenda.

The summary report from the Lima Consultation identified the need for:

- Cross-cultural research programs and activities with indigenous peoples to study the significance of sacred mountain sites in the environmental perceptions and natural resource management practices of different cultures throughout the world.

- Environmental conservation programs to give special attention to sacred mountain sites to enhance the conservation of biodiversity based on cultural and spiritual values.
- NGOs and government institutions to collaborate with local communities to ensure that they receive the appropriate policy, financial, and technical support needed to conserve and manage their sacred and cultural heritage.

Further, the April 1995 report from the ministerial level meeting of the Third Session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development states, in section 4 concerning Sustainable Mountain Development, that:

"Support is needed to recover and foster the cultural expression of mountain populations because mountain cultural diversity is a strong and valid basis for sustainable use and conservation of mountain resources."

For any assurance of long-term success, policies and programs directed toward preservation, development, and sustainable use of mountain environments need to take cultural, spiritual, and religious factors into account. Sacred Mountains and Environmental Conservation: A Practitioner's Workshop was designed to identify major cross-cultural themes regarding sacred mountain beliefs, and to lay the basis for guidelines to policymakers and development agencies regarding the role of sacred mountains in sustainable development, environmental policy, and cultural preservation. In addition, this initiative aimed to ensure the creation of a long-term information-sharing network for sacred mountain scholars, religious practitioners, and development officials through the networking infrastructure provided by the Mountain Forum. An overview of the meeting agenda and process is provided in Appendix A.

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Workshop Topics

The workshop discussion focused around four major topics, which emerged from the sharing of participants' observations and experiences. These topics are outlined below and form the framework for this report:

- 1. Analysis and identification of common themes regarding sacred mountains relating to cultural and environmental issues.
- 2. Exploration of the linkage between the sacred, spiritual, and symbolic significance of mountains and a) the cultural identity and life of a community and b) the conservation of mountain environments.
- 3. Identification of the threats, issues, and challenges relating to environment and culture in sacred mountain sites.

- 4. Development of a series of recommendations and guidelines linking sacred mountains and sacred sites in mountains to natural resource conservation, community development, and cultural advancement.

1. Common Sacred Mountain Themes

A variety of themes often found within sacred mountain traditions were identified. These themes are by no means exhibited in all traditions nor is this considered a comprehensive list.

Religions of Survival: Many indigenous and place-based communities have developed a "pattern language" of cultural land use based on the necessity of maintaining an existence in one place for a very long time. Harsh mountain environments make severe demands, and have severe consequences for certain actions or inaction; and this often may have dictated how these religions of survival developed over time. The beliefs of a community concerning sacred mountains and sacred mountain sites demonstrate an important link between the community's cultural identity and traditional patterns of land conservation and use. Beliefs about the sacredness of mountains support survival strategies designed to live within the bounds of the resources at hand. Resources are "safe" when traditional beliefs and practices are in place, and are threatened when they are ignored. A policy recommendation, therefore, is that: *local people must be involved in natural resource management decisions, so that their cultural understanding of and linkages to land use traditions can benefit conservation practices and policies.*

Religions of Survival share many or most of the following elements:

- There are strong bonds and commitments to traditional knowledge systems that are often held in secrecy (because the belief system is powerful).
- The belief system embodies complexity learned over generations or centuries.
- Beliefs support survival strategies designed to "live within a community's means" in one place over a long period of time.
- Beliefs embody the "what we don't understand" element of practices that a people has learned which work over time, but without always understanding why these practices work.
- Rituals and sacred practices create and support "extra-dimensional" states associated with holding and implementing special knowledge.
- The values and beliefs of the society are embodied in stories, transmitted in oral tradition.

Linkage to Surrounding Landscape: There is a spatial dimension to the cultural and spiritual beliefs associated with a landscape feature. The relationship which sacred mountains have with the surrounding landscape

elements has strong implications for resource conservation. Sacred Mountains are distinguished from other sacred sites as being exceptionally comprehensive ecosystems. Of all sacred elements

Religions of Survival

"My grandmother once told me mountains were sacred places and that I should have great respect for them. She told me if the mountains and springs and trees and minerals in mountains are not wisely used, tragic things could happen. And she knew the world like no other person I knew. She knew that the ants had influence on the soil and the soil had influence on the grass and the grass had influence on the deer and birds and so on. This has been learned over a very long time from observations of place-based people. She said by triggering the pressure points of certain places at certain times on the landscape or elsewhere in the universe we could willingly or unwillingly control the creation of beings, fertility, or even climate. This kind of knowledge is powerful and even dangerous if it is not respected. From my grandmother's words I have special appreciation for the sacred power of mountains because there are so many wrinkles, surfaces, and characters upon the mountains and therefore, many pressure points to protect or disturb."

—*Jim Enote, Pueblo of Zuni and Senior Fellow, TMI*

which may be present on a landscape, a mountain is generally the most comprehensive in terms of the ecology being protected by its sacredness. Further, the mountain itself, or the sacred site within the mountain, may be linked through cultural or spiritual beliefs to the protection of other landscape or cultural elements not actually on the mountain. Grazing in lower meadows, for example, is closely linked with ritual protection of mountain springs in the Himalaya. Mountains do not exist in isolation, but are integral elements of the surrounding natural and cultural environment.

Linkage to Time: In addition to the above-discussed spatial aspect of sacredness, there is also a temporal aspect, which has implications for conservation. In the Andes, for example, some mountain sites or landscape features may be either sacred or profane depending upon the time of day or the time of year. The Maori of New Zealand and groups in India allow for a site's sacredness to be transferred or in some cases to be consecrated or de-consecrated under certain conditions or by given individuals. A particular site or economic resource may have sacred restrictions placed upon it whenever that resource is seen to fall below a minimum level. This temporary sacred protection allows for the resource to regenerate and results in sustainable resource use over time. This practice has conservation implications as a site that was once protected by its sacredness can have its sacredness transferred

away. Conversely, a site or natural resource that is being exploited at unsustainable levels can be protected from overuse by a community's traditional cultural and spiritual value.

Diversity of Sacred Mountains: There is great diversity in the ways which mountains are held sacred. People revere them as centers of the universe, abodes of the gods, sources of life, tombs of the dead, places of inspiration, and in many other ways. Practices directed toward sacred mountains are equally diverse, ranging from simple rituals of offerings to ascetic forms of meditation and extended journeys of pilgrimage. Some people worship mountains themselves as deities; others revere them as holy places of worship. The same people for many different reasons frequently revere the same mountain. In addition, mountains are sacred for many different kinds and sizes of groups, ranging from individuals and local, indigenous communities to citizens of entire nations and adherents of world religions. A mountain may be just as sacred to someone who lives a thousand kilometers from it as to one who lives on its slopes. This diversity of sacred mountains needs to be taken into consideration in formulating programs of action or research.

Conflicts Between Competing Groups: While the traditional sacred beliefs of local communities are important, the diverse groups that utilize mountain resources do not uniformly hold the same beliefs. Not every indigenous group, pilgrim, adherent of religious tradition, or other interested party will hold the same site or mountain sacred for the same reason. This can often result in conflict between groups as to the reasons for sacred value and the allowable uses of a sacred resource. In addition to conflicts which can arise between indigenous groups over who has local control of sacred resources, conflict can also arise between indigenous groups and outside religious traditions, pilgrims, visitors, and tourists such as is happening in the United States between rock climbers and Native Americans. As a result of these conflicts, there is often a need to establish a legal framework to define access privileges and negotiate appropriate controls over sacred sites. Depending on the resource and the associated cultural values, any of the following access strategies may be appropriate:

- Exclude all or nearly all access other than from the indigenous community or religious traditions for which particular sites are sacred
- Permit access under strict controls
- Encourage access to encourage conservation
- Establish arrangements for outside pilgrims
- Allow open mass access to visitors and tourists.

In all cases, however, involvement of relevant stakeholders is essential to gain initial agreements on access, and to maintain these agreements over time. It is important to recognize that relevant stakeholders may include non-indigenous followers of religious traditions for whom the sites are also sacred.

Sacred Traditions Are Not Always Environmentally Sound: Not all aspects of sacred beliefs can be directly linked to conservation practices. Sometimes cultural practices or spiritual beliefs will actually be in conflict with natural resource conservation and environmental preservation. An example of this includes over-harvesting of plants and animals for traditional use in medicine or ceremony. This phenomena often occurs when markets or other outside influences change the context of the sacred use of the materials gathered. In a sense, these outside influences degrade the sustainable or conservative nature of the sacred harvesting methods. Further, ideas of inherent purity associated with a sacred resource such as the Ganges River can make people believe that the resource will never be polluted or degraded. This type of belief can also lead to unsustainable practices.

Tourism Can Have Positive and Negative Impacts: It is in the sacred places of the world where people often make contact with a higher or deeper reality. This very same quality is also what often leads to a site's development as a tourism destination. More often than not, tourism development is one of the few income generating industries available to marginalized mountain communities. While it is best to keep sacred cultural practices as private community matters, tourism can often generate significant income from sharing these practices with visitors and can be a significant economic development tool for the local community. If a community decides to open parts of its sacred tradition to outsiders, the central question then becomes, "How can tourism be developed and managed in a fashion which respects and addresses the wishes of the local community without creating unwanted changes to their resource base and their cultural traditions?" One way to ensure sustainable tourism, which is culturally and spiritually sensitive, is to support local initiatives and encourage local control. Communities and their religious leaders can then decide when and how much of their tradition to share with outsiders and what should be maintained as private, within the culture. When managed effectively with input and collaboration from local communities and adequate local control of resource access, tourism can be a beneficial mechanism for economic development in sacred mountain environments.

Private vs. Public Aspects of a Belief System: There must be a process whereby communities can use a public aspect of their cultural identity for community development through activities such as tourism while internally retaining the respect and power of the "secret" or private side of their belief system.

The Maori Legend of Taranaki, Mountain in Exile

In ages past, Taranaki lived in the centre of the North Island of New Zealand together with the mountains that are found there today: Tongariro, Ruapehu, Ngauruhoe, and especially Pihanga. Pihanga was a female mountain whom the others, all male, loved and fought for. Tongariro and Taranaki were the most

serious contenders and Tongariro eventually won, sending Taranaki on his way. Ploughing towards the West Coast, Taranaki formed the Wanganui River and then (according to one version of the story) travelled northwest to the site of the present city of New Plymouth. Here, where a small cumuldome named Paritutu stands, he began his journey back to Pihanga. Passing in turn the extinct volcanoes Kaitake and Pouakai, he was captured by Pouakai and bound fast. As he settled into position beside her he obliterated a village belonging to the central Taranaki tribe, who aided Pouakai in her endeavour to retain this desirable newcomer in their midst by later fixing him in place with ritual.

Sketched here in briefest detail, how much of this legend has a basis in fact? Vulcanologists speak of a fault line which runs in a NNW to SSE direction from just south of New Plymouth, and points towards the mouth of the Wanganui River. Emerging in sequence along this fault line, Paritutu is the oldest and Taranaki the youngest in a series of mainly andesitic volcanoes, of which Taranaki is quiescent rather than extinct. The discovery of a Maori *umu* (earth oven) beneath pumice and ash on Taranaki's lower slopes points to volcanic activity after Maori settlement there, and an eruption is reliably predicted for the future.

What then of the future? Will Taranaki move back along the fault line towards the Wanganui River down which he came? Or will he suddenly erupt and return more directly to Pihanga, over the miles which separate them? Beliefs fade, but the descendants of those who at one time refused to live east of the mountain, in the direction that Taranaki was expected to take, may one day provide an ending for this story.

—Ailsa Smith, Centre for Maori Studies and Research

Sacred Mountains and Environmental Conservation: A Practitioner's Workshop

2. The Linkage Between Sacred Mountains, Culture, and Conservation

2.1 Sacred Mountains and Culture

Mountains are unifying symbols for many different cultural groups as sources of inspiration, renewal, and faith. They also serve as sanctuaries for people, flora, and fauna. These cultural resources have associations with practices and beliefs that are rooted in the community's history. Sacred mountain beliefs are an important link to maintaining the cultural identity that is quickly being lost by many mountain communities as a result of outside influences.

The role of traditional leaders must be recognized and accepted, because sacredness is so often expressed in ritual and ceremonies, which form a "visceral vocabulary" that embodies traditional knowledge about inherently complex and diverse systems. It is important that religious, spiritual, and

cultural leaders be recognized who can convey the importance of these local traditions to governments and outsiders as well as to the local community members. In this way, renewed contacts between individuals and their sacred mountain traditions can help reawaken understanding and appreciation of important cultural resources. The cultural and religious authorities within a community must be integrated into planning and review of any community development or regulatory process in order to place decisions which may have an impact on the indigenous culture into the hands of the community. The sacred values of traditional communities are most often empowered through religious leaders who can shape development to move with and reinforce sacred beliefs.

Pilgrimage and Conservation in the Himalaya

Badrinath, the major Hindu pilgrimage place in the Indian Himalaya, lies in a remote valley of the Garhwal region at an altitude of 3,100 meters. It has been a focal point of religious devotion for thousands of years, but until recently, because of its difficulty of access, relatively few people actually managed to go there. Today 450,000 pilgrims a year come to the shrine from all over India, arriving on roads built in the early 1960s. Under the impact of so many visitors, the extensive forest that used to fill the valley has disappeared.

In 1993, at the suggestion of scientists from the G. B. Pant Institute of Himalayan Environment and Development, the Chief Priest of Badrinath agreed to use his religious authority to help restore the site. In a special ceremony he blessed tree seedlings supplied by the scientists and distributed them to pilgrims and local people to plant as an act of devotion. He also gave an inspiring talk that highlighted religious beliefs and myths emphasizing the physical and spiritual importance of trees in the Himalaya.

As part of his sermon, the Chief Priest of Badrinath related an important myth about the origins of the sacred Ganges in the Himalaya. The sage Bhagiratha prayed to Ganga, the goddess of the river, to come down from Heaven. Not wanting to leave her blissful abode, she protested that the force of her fall would shatter the earth. Shiva, one of the three forms of the supreme deity, offered to break her descent with the hair on his head. The Chief Priest noted that Hindu texts regard the trees of the Himalaya as Shiva's hair. In the summer the Ganges does indeed fall from Heaven in the form of monsoon rains, and when the Himalayan forests are stripped away, the earth literally shatters with landslides and floods. The Chief Priest further pointed out how tree roots hold the soil in place and added that if the pilgrims were seeking the blessings of Shiva they would do well to replant trees and restore his hair.

Everyone, even the beggars, responded with enthusiasm. Subsequent ceremonies have initiated an on-going program to re-establish Badrivan, the ancient sacred forest of Badrinath. The approach has been extended to another

religion with a tree-planting ceremony at the nearby Sikh Gurudwara or temple of Govindghat at the beginning of the pilgrimage path to Hemkund Sahib, the major Sikh pilgrimage place in the Himalaya. The ceremonial plantings of seedlings by the priests at Badrinath and nearby shrines have generated a great deal of enthusiasm. Nearly all the population is now in favor of tree planting and thinks the program to re-establish the sacred forest of Badrivan will succeed.

The next steps will be to strengthen the program at Badrinath and to extend it to additional sites and conservation measures. The reforestation at Badrinath shows how science and religion can work together for the benefit of the environment and the preservation of cultural and spiritual values. The collaboration of the different groups involved in the program is a promising model for involving people in environmental conservation measures for reasons that are culturally motivated and sustainable over the long term.

—Edwin Bernbaum, Research Associate, University of California Berkeley and Senior Fellow, TMI

Sacred Mountains and Environmental Conservation: A Practitioner's Workshop

Sacred Groves in Ghana

In the savanna ecosystem of Northern Ghana almost every village has its own "sacred grove." The area surrounding these groves has been heavily used for agriculture and is often degraded and denuded with very little natural vegetation in place. The traditional sacredness of these groves, considered the unifying reference element of a village or community, has resulted in the preservation and protection of islands of pristine native environments within a highly impacted landscape. Within the protected groves themselves, which are often small forests, we find native plant and tree species, animals, and important medicinal plants and herbs.

A UNESCO project, conducted in partnership with the Ghana Environmental Protection Agency and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Development, has established protective buffer zones around these groves with the goal of enhancing environmental conservation and restoring the surrounding landscape. In this example, the protection and restoration of remnant pieces of an important savanna ecosystem is based on the traditional beliefs and cultural values of the local community.

—Thomas Schaaf, UNESCO

Efforts must be made to increase recognition by governments and outsiders regarding the importance and cultural significance of sacred mountains, and the opportunity to enhance the protection of environment and natural

resources through these cultural beliefs. Value should be placed on non-analytical methods to increase knowledge, understanding, and respect of traditional sacred beliefs in younger generations, tourists, scientists, local officials, and educators. In order to revitalize the inner values of traditions, efforts should focus on empowering the traditional approaches for socializing people on the importance of maintaining their cultural heritage.

Even in modern, secular societies, mountains awaken a sense of wonder and awe that set them apart as sacred places imbued with a special evocative power and significance. Many people in these societies view ranges like the Alps of Europe and the Sierra Nevada of North America in this light. Individuals go to these mountains for spiritual inspiration and renewal, and regard them as embodiments of important cultural values. The cultural and inspirational value of mountains has played a vital role in the establishment of national parks and is one of the most effective tools for galvanizing public support for the conservation of wilderness areas. It also provides a means for eliciting empathy and support among people of influence in developed societies and economies for protecting and preserving the diverse environments and cultures of traditional sacred mountains.

2.2 Sacred Mountains and Environmental Conservation

Sacred Mountains and sacred sites within mountains have resulted in communities maintaining and preserving their natural resources in often-pristine conditions. Indigenous communities have long realized the value of the high diversity and natural resources within mountains, and that mountains are resources of nature which nurture. The strong link between environmental conservation and spiritual beliefs should be taken into account during resource management planning processes.

The natural protection sacred mountains have received due to cultural beliefs has resulted in precious water, timber, flora, fauna, and other natural resources being maintained and preserved for future generations. To ensure long-term success, the beliefs and practices of a community need be linked to the basis for natural resource conservation. For example, sacred mountains and the cultural beliefs surrounding them can serve as inspirational communication tools for new conservation efforts. Communities can develop their own locally appropriate conservation plans and activities, so that the beliefs and practices that have conserved the environment in a sustainable manner for centuries can be honored and maintained.

The link between spirituality and conservation will be strongest when there are genuine partnerships between religious and spiritual leaders who can first identify and set conditions for resource management, and regulatory/legislative authorities who can help by providing technical, scientific, and policy expertise. Further, partnerships with scholarly

researchers can be useful in establishing examples of where and when culturally based approaches to conservation work and where and when they don't. However, the role of cultural and religious authorities must be strengthened in the planning, review, and regulatory processes in order to place natural resource management within the means of a community (the "means" referred to are the resource limitations themselves, which in turn are embodied in cultural and sacred beliefs).

Involving cultural and religious leaders helps strengthen both natural resource management and cultural integrity/survival; they can often identify and define parameters for implementation, but their role will vary greatly in different localities. The Andean paradigm is a useful model in this respect. It builds deliberately and explicitly on inherent reciprocity (*ayni*) between communities, natural resources, and the sacredness of mountains (replenishing the life forces).

Both indigenous and non-indigenous people often accord heightened value to the natural resources within sacred mountains or near sacred sites. This has implications for how people will use, develop, and conserve these resources. The affinity and value people have for sacred mountains and sacred mountain sites offers local communities the opportunity to attract outsiders and raise funds for investment in locally driven conservation and development programs.

The spiritual and cultural value of mountains, particularly as places of renewal and inspiration, has played a key role in the genesis of contemporary environmental movements and continues to motivate people in modern, as well as traditional, societies to take actions to protect wilderness areas and the environment in general.

3. Challenges, Issues, and Threats

A variety of challenges, issues, and threats to sacred mountain environments and traditions were identified by the workshop participants.

- 1. Policy makers, development officials, and people of influence often do not take spirituality or sacred cultural beliefs into account when dealing with natural resource and cultural issues. Worse, the twin legacies of western theologies and "scientific rationalism" often make these officials embarrassed to acknowledge and deal with sacred values regarding mountains.
- 2. Natural sacred sites such as mountains, forests, or groves are often not recognized as having a valid basis for conservation or legal protection by policymakers. This is in contrast to manmade sacred sites such as temples, altars, or other such sites, which are often recognized and protected as valuable cultural resources.

- 3. There is no institutional framework for management of sacred sites. These sites often fall into general resource management categories such as National Parks, Preserves, Biosphere Reserves, etc.
- 4. We are seeing a loss of tradition by new generations. Modernization often results in loss of cultural traditions. The influence of outsiders from tourism, pilgrimages, or business can devalue the local traditions. The local cultural traditions then run the risk of being displaced by the dominant outside culture.
- 5. Population increases and internal/external economic development pressures are leading to encroachment on previously untouched sacred areas for living space, agricultural use, or extraction of resources. There are many urgent and competing uses for and rights to the natural resources in mountainous regions.
- 6. Increases in "cultural tourism" are resulting in greater demands being placed on sacred mountain sites and their local communities.
- 7. Media and science can demystify sacred traditions, resulting in a loss of the basis for the underlying belief structure.
- 8. The oral nature of many sacred traditions results in those traditions being particularly vulnerable.
- 9. There is no available/accessible information base or information repository for the storing of information relating to sacred sites and sacred beliefs. This could result in a loss of knowledge in the future if a particular cultural tradition is abandoned.
- 10. Many sacred sites have been appropriated by outside groups and given significance not previously held by the indigenous community. The competing sacred values that result can severely impact the opportunities for the traditional indigenous group to continue their cultural practices.
- 11. Introduction of exotic species can often have a negative biological impact on mountain environments and the related sacred sites.
- 12. A lack of appreciation for cultural diversity by institutions of influence and central authorities leads to homogenization and the loss of marginalized traditions.
- 13. Mountain sites tend to be more ecologically fragile and regenerate more slowly than lowland pilgrimage sites. Growing numbers of pilgrims are severely impacting many sacred sites in mountains. The Periya National Park in southern India, for example, receives more than 30 million pilgrims during one particular week of each year.
- 14. A powerful and active outside religious group can have dramatic influence on smaller religious traditions. The result may be a decline in the traditional sacred values and a change in the land practices previously associated with those values.
- 15. The impacts of modernization, influx of outside ideas and groups, and population growth have resulted in erosion of traditional beliefs and practices that have been extremely effective in preserving environments

at sacred sites which are now being overwhelmed. In many cases, these controls need to be revitalized and adapted to changing circumstances.

4. Recommendations and Guidelines

Workshop participants identified priority recommendations and guidelines for natural resource and cultural conservation of sacred mountains in four categories; Policy, Research, Education/Outreach, and Action Programs.

4.1 Policy Recommendations

At the policy level there is a need for:

- The creation of a forum or institution to serve as networking and coordinating focal point for issues relating to the sacred, spiritual, and symbolic significance of mountains. This institution would also manage an easily accessible database of all legislation and regulations regarding sacred mountains and sacred sites in mountains, as well as maintain a database on individuals and organizations involved in work related to sacred mountains.
- Collection, synthesis, and communication of the policy recommendations from the Lima Consultation, the Spruce Workshop, UNESCO, and other meetings related to sacred mountains or sacred/culturally significant sites in general. Efforts then need to be made to harmonize national and international policies with these recommendations.
- Development of proposals, workshops, and recommendations on dealing with the competing and conflicting uses of and access rights to sacred mountains.
- Development of policy guidelines on the appropriate methods for linking sacred cultural practices and conservation of mountain resources.
- Support of local communityinitiated activities, which seek to integrate conservation of natural resources and culture traditions.
- Creation of mechanisms to provide information and recommendations regarding sacred mountains to all meetings and workshops related to:

– The Mountain Agenda

– Natural and cultural resource conservation in mountain environments.

4.2 Research Recommendations

There is a need to know more about the linkages between sacred mountain traditions, cultural conservation, and environmental preservation. This is often an area which is unfamiliar to anthropologists and others in the scientific

community. There is also resistance to research by local people who do not see the applied benefit within their community and who have strong intimate feelings toward the subject matter itself. Further, research results can often validate traditional wisdom and practices.

- A prioritized research agenda is called for.
- Codes of culturally appropriate conduct should be established for researchers investigating sacred mountain sites and sacred mountains. Specifically, these codes of conduct should focus on respecting intellectual and property rights of indigenous groups.
- Research grants program needs to be established with priority given to the funding of research in the areas of:

– Development of an inventory and description of sacred mountains and sacred mountain sites. When possible, this research should be conducted and initiated by the indigenous culture.

– Study of the history, meaning, and ways in which sacred mountain traditions are directly linked to resource conservation.

– The real value of sacred mountains as sites for environmental conservation.

– Studies to identify sacred sites which have been maintained in pristine condition. These sites can then be used as reference sites for the restoration of degraded environments.

– Studies to determine the nature of the interrelationship between environment and culture in different communities.

– Studies to determine the positive impacts of cultural tourism and how a community, while mitigating the negative consequences of cultural tourism, can capitalize on it.

– Studies of the different views of sacred mountains that have widespread distribution across cultural and religious traditions, such as mountains as centers of the universe or source of life. These views or themes can serve as the basis for developing guidelines that support and encourage environmental conservation based on traditional beliefs and practices.

4.3 Education and Outreach—Recommendations and Guidelines

Perhaps the most critical need is for education and outreach program that create awareness among development officials, political representatives, and the general public regarding the issues surrounding preservation of environmental and cultural resources in and around sacred sites.

Sacred Mountains and Environmental Conservation: A Practitioner's Workshop
Educational programs should create new methods for reviving and renewing the traditional ways of transmitting knowledge within communities. The educational message should be transmitted using a variety of formats (film, video, Internet, radio, print media, exhibits and museums, theater, lectures, interpretative displays, cultural exchanges, toys and games, etc.). Further, the content of all educational materials should be derived from the custodians of the particular site in question and based on the local traditions. This will ensure access to the greatest variety of individuals both inside and outside the community. An educational outreach program can be conducted through a variety of mechanisms which:

- Ensure that the distributed information does not have a negative impact on the sacred values of the community and that any benefits flow directly to the people around the site.
- Empower and help traditional teachers within the community.
- Train local guides and interpreters.
- Provide support and resources to help local communities develop cultural centers and museums.

Educational Content of Outreach Programs

Basic education materials should be:

- Derived from thorough research.
- Based on the knowledge and interpretation of the communities for whom the site is sacred.
- Published in the languages of the concerned culture/community.
- Targeted to youth, teachers, governments, officials, and outsiders, including tourists, development agencies, and corporate interests.
- In both a written and non-written format (audio-visual, oral, experiential, games).

Further, educational programs should include answers to questions such as:

- What are mountains?
- What do mountains mean to people?
- What makes a mountain sacred?
- What are the different ways in which mountains can be sacred?
- How do the values enshrined in mountains relate to the core values and aspirations of people around the world?
- What do people do in mountains?
- What are mountain resources and what do they mean to humanity?
- What are the threats to mountain resources, communities, and cultures?
- What can be done to protect mountain resources?

4.4 Recommended Action Programs

Action is urgently needed in the following areas:

- Development of community-based conservation action and implementation plans for sacred mountain sites.
- Development of general approaches to the conservation and protection of sacred mountain sites based on widely distributed themes linked to peoples' own cultural and spiritual traditions.
- Participatory documentation of sacred mountain traditions to capture as many aspects of local tradition as possible (oral, painting, musical, video, textile, crafts, dance).
- Development of legislation specifically designed to offer protection at the international and local level to natural sacred sites.
- Development of an inventory of sacred sites with the guidance and input of local communities regarding public dissemination and further outside support.
- Convening a larger conference with widely published results and commissioned papers.
- Establishment of an electronic network designed to link sacred mountain scholars, practitioners, and relevant development officials.
- Ensuring that government/development agencies and private enterprises recognize the significance of natural sacred sites.
- Increasing collaboration with local communities.
- Implementing programs to raise the standards of living for communities around sacred sites (economic, health, wholeness, etc.).
- Empowering local communities to manage their own natural sacred sites.
- Increasing exchange and joint implementation between organizations involved in work related to sacred sites in mountains.

Appendix A

Meeting Process Summary

The workshop began with introductions from all participants. To gain consensus on an agenda for the three days, participants were also asked to share their personal goals and expectations for the meeting. Next a framework of norms and guidelines was established concerning individual and group behavior, and a workshop agenda was agreed upon.

While formal presentations by the participants had not been arranged ahead of time, all participants felt that it would be beneficial for interested individuals to give brief presentations on the issues, challenges, and background regarding resource conservation and cultural advancement within their sacred traditions. After each of the informal presentations, workshop members discussed the salient points brought forth by the presenter.

The issues raised during these presentations and discussed by the workshop participants set the tone and focus for the workshop.

Appendix B

Commitments

At the end of the workshop, the participating organizations and individuals made the following commitments:

Thomas Schaaf pledged on behalf of UNESCO that UNESCO will:

Continue to focus on Sacred Mountains and Sacred Sites at the intergovernmental level.

Continue to collaborate with TMI on these and related issues.

D. Jane Pratt pledged on behalf of TMI that TMI will:

Continue to promote Sacred Mountains within the Mountain Agenda.

Identify priorities for research.

Identify possible sources of funding to support Sacred Mountain related work.

Identify researchers with interest in the topic.

Seek to give credibility to the linkage between culture, conservation, and sacred beliefs.

Serve in a coordinator role for sacred mountains.

Work to archive data on sacred mountain traditions, legislation, recommendations, research, etc.

In addition, TMI and UNESCO will collaborate in coordinating activities related to sacred mountain research and programs. A working group will be created to implement this collaboration.

Pei Shengji pledged to:

Continue ethno-botanical sacred mountain research (with ICIMOD).

Link his ongoing work in this field with the Center for Indigenous Knowledge and Biodiversity in China.

Gabriel Martinez pledged to:

Continue research on Sacred Mountains being associated with area and comparative areas.

Edwin Bernbaum pledged to:

Conduct outreach and research.

Pursue outreach and education through continued presentation of lectures, slide shows, and exhibits to national and international audiences.

Research ways of integrating Sacred Mountains and conservation.

Continue work with the Badrinath Project, which links sacred beliefs and conservation.

Participate in the joint TMI/UNESCO working group as possible.

Jim Enote pledged to:

Conduct outreach with indigenous organizations, networks, and tribal leaders through information sharing.

Participate in the working group as appropriate.

Johan Reinhard pledged to:

Conduct outreach through lectures, exhibitions, publications, Internet, Films, and special crafts.

Jorge Flores pledged to:

Work with Paulueha to protect sacredness of site and ritual in Peru.

Lhakpa Sherpa pledged to:

Continue to conduct research related to sacred mountains.

Find ways to link sacred belief and work with National Parks and Mountain Spirit in Nepal.

Esther Njiro pledged to:

Complete current publication on sacred mountain beliefs.

Continue pursuing personal interest in the topic.

J. Gabriel Campbell pledged to:

Work to strengthen the existing Sacred Mountains component of all of TMI's Himal programs and share the experiences from this workshop with colleagues.

Initiate and support larger Sacred Mountain projects in Badrinath, and possibly Khumbu and elsewhere.

Ailsa Smith pledged to:

Explore opportunities and share recommendations with the Center for Mountain Studies.

Record cultural richness of Sacred Mountains in New Zealand.

Link with other individuals and communicate with other Ring of Fire countries.

Harka Gurung pledged to:

Commit to Sacred Mountain outreach through travel and writing on the topic.

Contribute to the Sacred Mountains Working Group as needed.

Function as an "Ambassador" for Sacred Mountains to groups around the world.

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Notes to readers

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