

Title	KOYASAN : A Demonstration of the Compatability of Man, Nature and Art
Author(s)	COLLETT, Brian Richard; ABE, Daishu
Editor(s)	
Citation	Bulletin of the University of Osaka Prefecture. Ser. B, Agriculture and biology. 1987, 39, p.33-45
Issue Date	1987-03-31
URL	<a href="http://hdl.handle.net/10466/3211">http://hdl.handle.net/10466/3211</a>
Rights	

## KOYASAN: A Demonstration of the Compatability of Man, Nature and Art

Brian Richard COLLETT\* and Daishu ABE

Laboratory of Urban Landscape Design, College of Agriculture

(Received October 31, 1986)

### Abstract

During the academic school year of 1975-1976, this study was carried out as the theme of an exchange graduate student at University of Osaka Prefecture. Quite aware of Japan's tremendous cultural assets directly and indirectly related to the field of environmental design, and at the same time aware of the overwhelming difficulty of the language and complexity of the culture, it was made the selection of a study in which could develop a broader understanding of the language, culture, and environment and yet one still relevant to the field of environmental design. The selection for a study of a Buddhist temple and its environs thus evolved through these considerations.

Much of the research carried out while studying at University of Osaka Prefecture was not incorporated into the final draft of this study. Before any assumptions could be made regarding specifics of the study, a basic context had to be at least superficially understood. Thus the effort and time spent was invaluable as a background and basis for all the research which followed. This study have tried to resist the temptation of including the interesting but extraneous data and miscellanea in order to limit the scope to its bare stratum of pertinent information.

### Introduction

Early in the ninth century a temple-settlement named Koyasan was founded in a remote region of the Wakayama Peninsula of Japan. A Buddhist priest named Kukai (posthumous Kobodaishi) initiated its construction and formulated the religious principles which have been abided by to this day. The settlement still stands, having survived the physical upheavals of a thousand years. Koyasan, named after the mountain under which it was built, was founded as a retreat for aspirants pursuing the path of Shingon, a form of Esoteric or Tantric Buddhism.

This study of the temple settlement of Koyasan is based on a simple observation: that the settlement, including both structures and activities, has achieved a remarkable state of compatability with its surroundings and has done so despite the adversity incurred during the 1000 years of its existence. From this observation the questions asked were: what considerations during the initial site selection and subsequent development contributed to its endurance and compatability? What mechanisms, policies, rites, and practices further insured its existence? Was there an active effort to limit its scale, thereby achieving a defined form within its environment? By what fabric have the set of activities practiced by the founders woven their way to the present?

Although there has been no elaborated attempt to compere Koyasan physically or conceptually with a mode of development or a typical community within a Western frame of reference, the contrast is essential for the primary observations of this study.

\* Brian Richard Collett Landscape Design

Thus, the points of reference for this study as: (1) there is little precedence in Western tradition of an enduring spirit such as Koyasan's; (2) there are few models of environmentally adaptive community planning and design; and (3) there are equally few examples of a comprehensive design system which has incorporated a multi-disciplinary approach thus extending the scope of design to every facet of development.

### Religious and Political Setting

In the year 816 Kukai requested of the Emperor Saga a portion of land to the south of Nara known as Mt. Koya. The request memorial reads as follow:

"I Kukai have heard that where the mountains are high the clouds let fall much rain thus nourishing vegetation and that where drops of water accumulate fishes and dragons breed and multiply. Thus it was that the Buddha preached on steep Mt. Gridhatkuta (India) and that Aualoketesvara manifested himself on Mt. Potalaka whose strange peaks and precipices face the shores. Indeed, these mountains had evoked their presence. Students of meditation fill the five Buddhist temples on Mt. Wu-t'ai (N. China) . . . these mountains are the treasures of the nation. They are like bridges for the people. According to the meditation sutras, meditation should be practiced preferably on a flat area deep in the mountains. When young, I, Kukai, often walked through mountain areas and crossed many rivers. There is a quiet open space called Koya located two day's walk south from Yoshino. High peaks surround Koya in all four directions; no human tracks, still less trails are to be seen there. I should like to clear the wilderness in order to build a monastery there for the practice of meditating for the benefit of the nation and of those who desire to discipline themselves<sup>1)</sup>?"

The Esoteric Buddhism expounded by Kukai presented the first major variation from the orthodox schools. Prior to the Esotericism, doctrines and sutras could be traced back to the living buddha Shakamuni. The different sects all depended upon the same set of scriptures while taking liberty to emphasize their particular viewpoint. The Esoteric opinion considered the living Buddha only one of many forms of the absolute (Dharmakaya) Buddha. It was Kukai's position that the Great Sun Buddha, Mahavairocana (Japanese: Dainichi Nyorai) was the ultimate manifestation of the Buddha. Some of the significant transformations that occurred following this new interpretation were as follows:

1. The Shinto Sun Goddess Amaterasu entered into the Buddhist pantheon. The centering upon the sun deity helped unite Shinto beliefs with Buddhist. This opened the previously cloistered Buddhist worship to the populace who still overwhelmingly followed the Shinto native belief.

2. The distinct separation of the older school Kenkyo (Exoteric) from the Mikkyou (Esoteric) school occurred without the loss of credibility of either. Kukai constructed a sequential arrangement on different doctrines from the least to the most enlightened in order to demonstrate the superiority of Shingon. Kukai maintained that all religious contained at least portions of truth but that Shingon was the most encompassing.

3. Since Shingon believed in the abstract Buddha, "one that has no precise physical manifestation<sup>2)</sup>," a great amount of innovative imagery and dogma was needed to convey this new belief. Thus, an elaborate array of new imagery was nurtured.

4. The absence of a formal doctrine enabled Shingon to expand its philosophical

horizons to include ideas and beliefs of China, India, Tibet, and Southeast Asia. Thus a synthesizing of ideas took place which combined a variety of disciplines into one syncretic philosophy.

5. In the Kenkyou (Exoteric) sects, the process by which one reaches the ultimate goal, Higan (paradise), required perhaps thousands of lifetimes and reincarnations while abiding by the Eight Noble Truths. The final ascension would occur as a transformation of spirit. In Shingon, however, the transformation of spirit was believed to be an instantaneous experience. "Instant enlightenment in this very existence" was a basic theme to Kukai's doctrine. Kukai had expressed the idea that since everyone possessed an innate health of the spirit, enlightenment was the reawakening of that spirit.

6. A great emphasis was placed upon what was referred to as the dramatic sensory experience. That is, through the power of sensory imagination one could reach this innate health of spirit - - - enlightenment. Paramount to this experience was the setting was deliberately arranged to provide an image which would facilitate this raised state of consciousness. Full of a vast assortment of images, icons, incantations, ritual objects, and activities, this setting functioned as a theatrical stage, providing all the props required for creating a designed illusion. The sensory devices, more so that words, conveyed the essential concepts of the religion - - - a religion which Kukai the founder had described as existing beyond words.

The use of symbolism as a means of expressing ideas and concepts of the religion had a tremendous effect upon the disposition and character of the Koyasan settlement. It is this writer's contention that symbolism was the primary design dictum which guided Koyasan's founders in developing the general organization of the settlement, resolving the detailed relationships of its components, and enabling a conscientious vigilance throughout its existence. Significant to this application of symbolism was the absence of precedence and example: a condition which forced an intuitively derived assortment of images and forms. Equally important was the awe and reverence towards the natural environment expressed by Kukai and his enthusiasts which further qualified the kind of symbolism used. However, for this study, the content and meanings of Shingon symbolism have not been explored in detail since it is neither directly pertinent to the focus nor is it within the capacity of this writer to fully reckon with. The following are the general categories of symbols utilized in conveying the vast collection of Shingon sensory conceptualizations.

Mandalas: (Fig. 1) Perhaps the most unifying symbol seen throughout the various art motifs is the mandala. The mandala is depicted as a circle, sphere, or tower and symbolizes a domain or system.

"Two equally important aspects of mandala symbolism emerge: the mandala serves a conservative purpose - - - namely, to restore a previously established order. But it also serves the creative function of giving expression and form to something that does not yet exist . . . Something new and unique<sup>3)</sup>."

In Shingon there are two basic types of mandalas - - - the Matric or Lotus Mandala, and the Diamond or Vajra Mandala. Both are depicted as circles.

The Diamond Mandala was described as representing potentials and the Lotus Mandala was said to represent actual conditions. They presented simultaneously the arrangement and functioning of the entire universe (macrocosmos) and any of the subspheres of order (microcosmos). The use of the circle within a circle is a repeated pattern in Koyasan and one of its more literal meanings is the concept of a domain within a domain.

In Shingon the physical elements are represented by five basic symbols: earth, water,

fire, wind, and space. They are depicted with a variety of geometric shapes (See Fig. 2), such as a cylinder, cube, sphere, or cone. These symbols were incorporated into an assortment of media: an entrance gateway, a grave marker, or a detail of a sculpture, etc. (Fig. 3)

The Shingon statues and paintings are multilevel communication media which served to demonstrate concepts (Fig. 4). Full of subtleties to be deciphered by the observer, they represent an amalgamation of Hindu, Tibetan, Chinese, and innovative icons. One of the communication systems found within these art forms is the Mudra. Mudra is a language of the hands by which the statue or painting can present to the viewer a subtle and intricate thought (Fig. 5). Yet the Mudra is simple on mode of communication within the art form. Thus it is conceivable that the same image could have many different meanings to one disparate group of observers, depending upon each individual's point of reference.

Incantations are a form of audio symbolism by which sounds manifest the same multileveled communications. Most of the chants used are derived directly from the Indian Sanscrit.

Along with the ideological changes which occurred during the formative period of the Esoteric sects was the physical transformation of the temple structure and grounds. As previously stated, the various religious implements (e.e., statues, paintings, etc.) were embodied with greater significance and figurative meaning the rise of the Esoteric sects and it was consistent that the temple configuration ways included as a symbolic mediums.

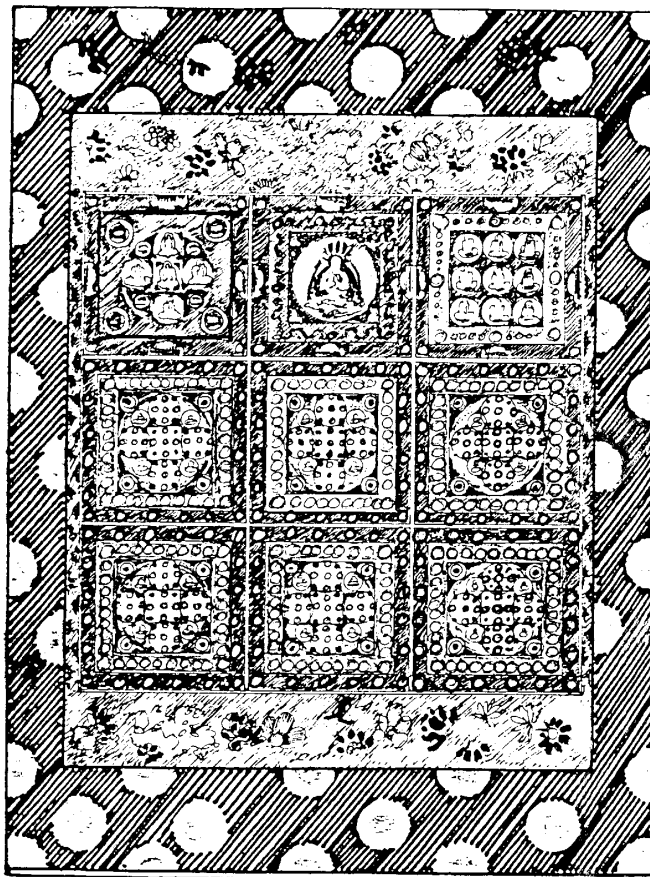


Fig. 1 Diamondo Mandala

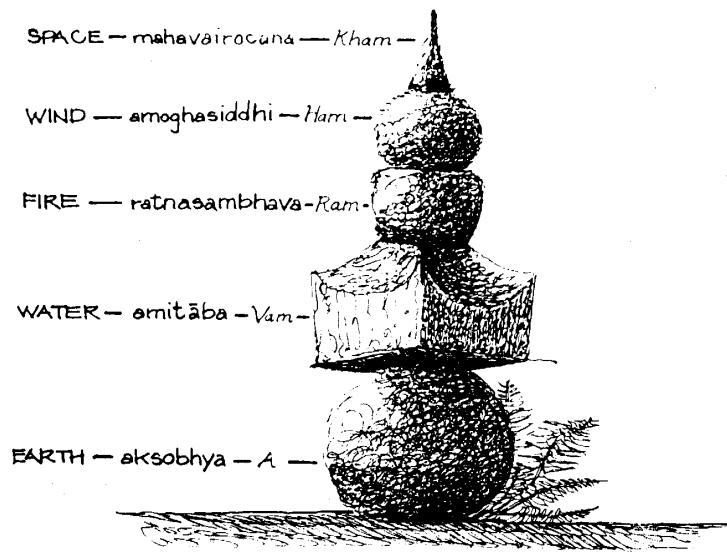


Fig. 2 The Five Great Elements

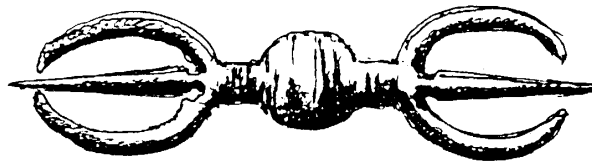


Fig. 3 Vajra Symbol



Fig. 4 Shingon Statues

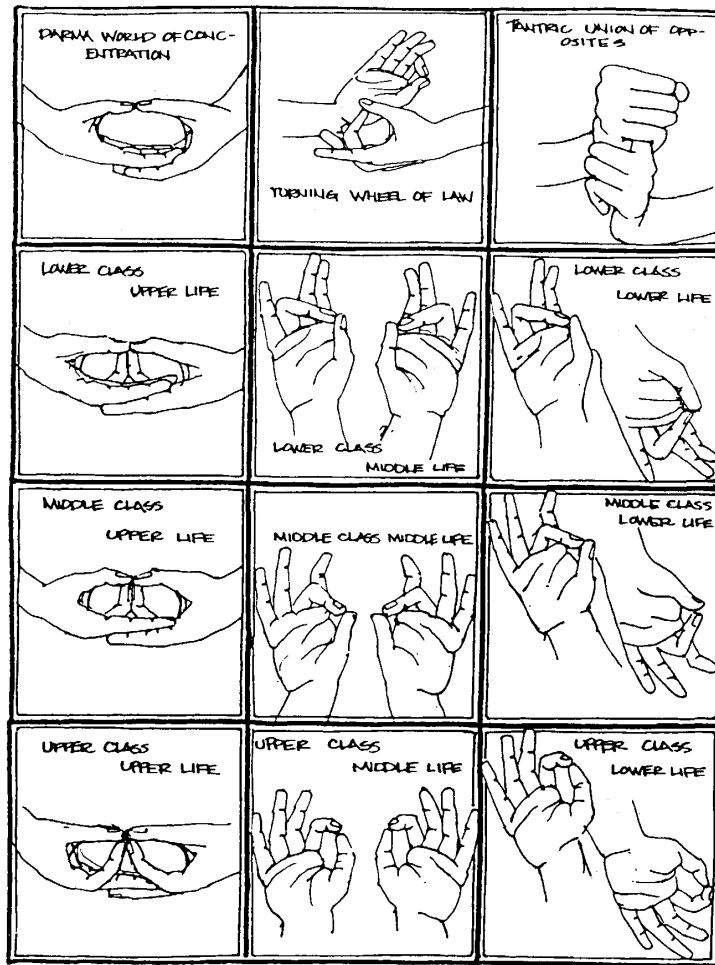


Fig. 5 Mudra Symbolism

### Historical Development of Temples

The first Buddhist edifices built in Japan (593) were expressions of the Kenkyou (Esoteric) school. Entirely symmetrical, the Kondo or sacred hall was situated in the center and surrounded by a generous space. Entry was from the south and the path from the entry was linear and led directly to the north. The temples were built on flat land and constructed in accordance with the Chinese concept of geomancy. From the late Sixth Century through the middle of the Eighth Century the temple arrangement remained consistent to this geometric order - - - scale expanded, height and dimensions all increased, but at approximately equal proportions. Todaiji of Nara, the greatest construction of the early geometric style was built as the supreme head of all the provincial temples.

Temples built in Japan up until the divergence of the Mikkyo (Esoteric) sects (Tendai and Shingon) were built in this symmetrical fashion. As the dogma was an imported collection of thoughts from India and China, so was the architecture. Temples were constructed as if from a blueprint. The structures enclosing vast spaces and built only on the flat were an extravagant use of productive land. The interior spaces were formal

and static. With no refined articulation within itself, the space served only as a leftover between structures.

The introduction of the Esoteric schools initiated the transition from the Chinese spatial arrangements of symmetry. Two separate factors contributed to this transformation when the Esoteric sects began the exodus from the flat urban settings in preference for the rugged, isolated, and mountainous retreats. The geometric arrangement could not easily be transposed to the irregular topography of the mountains.

Standards for symmetry in the organization of structures and spaces were subsequently with more adaptive and site-responsive ones. Materials and styles were more improvisational. These changes all were attributable to the functional aspects of construction within a mountainous setting. Yet at the same time, there was occurring the ideological change within the religion.

In the Esoteric sect, the Kondo (main temple) is a literal center. The Daibutsuden of Todaiji is an example of this explicit arrangement. With the Esoteric sect, the center became more figurative and symbolic. To place a structure in the center would have been a contradiction since the center was perceived as the profound image of heaven itself. Higan (heaven) was interpreted as a void or a non-entity and thus the empty space of the Esoteric temple became the dynamic element in design. No longer seen as the complimentary support of the structure, it became the central organizing feature of the structure surrounding it. The asymmetry resulting from this organization produced a tension, "a feeling of ambiguity, which was intended to invoke a more explorative aspect of the imagination<sup>4)</sup>." The literal center of the Esoteric temple filled with the figure of the Buddha was replaced in Esoteric with a hollow space. "We may gaze at it yet cannot clearly see it. Its features merge as a kaleidoscope distant yet in a co-existing space<sup>5)</sup>."

What is difficult to discern is what contributed most significantly to this metamorphosis of temple architecture - - - the limitations effected by the land form, or the intrinsic changes of the philosophy, which required a new style of architecture to contain it. An additional influence may have been the integration of traditional building style of Shinto architecture.

### The Environment

At an elevation of 800 meters, Koyasan sits in the mountainous terrain of the Ki peninsula. It comprises two small drainage basins surrounded by a lofty ridgeline. As high plateau, it stands as a unique land form in relationship to the general topography of the region. Mountains, steep canyons, and fast-flowing, quickly descending streams characterize the typical land form. Extensive areas of flatland are found only near the ocean and along the larger river basins. Koya district, an area of 136 square kilometers, has less than eight km<sup>2</sup> of ground which is 15 % slope or less. Koyasan contains half of those eight km<sup>2</sup>.

Koyasan is a shallow valley surrounded by gradually sloping ridges. The ridges, besides defining the valley area, visually isolate it from the outside. The exterior slopes are much steeper than those on the valley side. The high points of these ridges are the mountains of Koyasan. Viewed from the valley they appear deceptively low because of the already high elevation of the plateau. The ridges divide into smaller ribs on the interior side. The smaller ridges and ravines tend to break up the whole valley into more intricate sub-spaces, although there is a continuous axis from west to east



sloping only slightly to the east. The sub-spaces link with the main axis somewhat resembling the veination of a leaf.

Two streams flow through Koyasan: the Tamagawa from an adjoining valley to the north and the Okawa which follows the west-east slope. They both flow throughout the year, since their sources are from springs.

In his early writings Kukai described the character of the Koyasan region as obscure and remote. Hanging clouds concealing the physical perimeters of the region also encouraged a rich response of lush vegetation due to the quantities of sustaining moisture. Vines, ferns, mosses, lichen, and a variety of fungi made up a major portion of the vegetation community. In early journals, the vegetation was described as dense, consisting primarily of deciduous trees with an extremely varied understory features. The abundance of springs also contributed on the lush appearance of Koya Mt. The combination of a high precipitation rate, the lingering cloud cover, the constant availability of spring water, and gradual slopes, enabled the growth of what was described by Kukai as "marshy plain" - - - a saturated flatland lying hidden within misty mountains enhanced with exotic or rare plants and animals especially adapted to such an environment. Legends or myths describe encounters with the Tengu, a snake-like creature: The kind of extraordinary beast that one might expect to find in the nether world of a high marsh shrouded by fog or mist.

The vegetation enhanced the image of Koyasan as a world of its own - - - set apart from the productive Yamato plains of the Nara Valley to the north. In the 9th century, the region around Mt. Koya was truly remote of a wilderness.

Koyasan, because of its elevation, remains considerably colder than the lowlands. In the winter it is extremely cold. The average December temperature is around 29 degrees, compared to 41 degrees in Kyoto. Similarly, the summer average is a cool 70°, compared to an 81° average in the capital. This temperature difference in turn affects the quality of vegetation.

Koyasan received an average of 80 inches a year of rainfall compared with about 50 inches in the capital. Again, because of its elevation and greater coldness, Koyasan was frequented by snowstorms - an occurrence which was rare for the capital. The pattern evident suggests that there was a clearly distinguishable contrast in the climate pattern between the capital and Mt. Koya.

With less humidity in a thinner atmosphere the sky is more vivid with sharper contrasts between earth, cloud, and sky. Koyasan was also characterized by hanging clouds which change in shape and variety constantly - a condition which livened the contrast of light and shadow.

### Site Selection

The visual effect of the mountainous topography is the restriction of extended views. The sweeping panoramas in the Nara and Kyoto region did not exist in Koyasan. A vantage from any point in Kyoto allowed one to see the entire region. At Koyasan the vegetation in combination with the topography limited the views to short spans. The higher ridges completely excluded any outward views, thus enhancing the spirit of an independent and inward space. It appears entirely consistent with the development of a new doctrine which expressed a subjective philosophy and one which required a controlled set of environmental features, that the location selected for it would facilitate

its conceptual ideas. The self-enclosing topography undoubtedly enriched the esoteric nature of the Shingon philosophy.

In the ninth century, flat ground, even within the mountains was a requirement for temple construction. It was said that Kukai was seeking to find an area which resembled the Chinese capital of Cha-an. Cha-an was also located within the mountains on a high plateau. During his stay in China, Kukai had been overwhelmed with the grandeur of its capital city. Yearly availability of water was undoubtedly another important factor for the site selection.

Another criterion was Mt. Koya's scale. The scale of Koya is not expansive and thus is well-suited to the pedestrian. The longest span within the valley is only 4.5 kilometers, or about a 50-minute walk. Minimal elevation changes also lessen the effort of walking. Most of the distances traveled within the valley are less than a kilometer.

On the steep slopes of the upper ridges are jagged outcroppings. Twisted greystone lies hidden beneath the modern day forest plantations which blanket the flatlands and hills alike. Specific reference to this rugged disposition in Kukai's early descriptions helps clarify its presettlement conditions. What is significant about the character of the site is that, although Kukai refers to it as the ideal environment, it is anything but an oasis or Eden. It is not a paradise as construed by any western concept. In 1772 the English writer Gilpin, while describing a region of the English Lake District, related, "here is beauty indeed lying in the lap of horror." Kukai in contrast believed the mountains of Koya – rugged and austere – to be the closest resemblance of heaven on earth.

The political folly which had devastated the old Nara religious establishment was partially attributed to its physical proximity to the central government. It was undoubtedly Kukai's intention of assuring a degree of autonomy and independence purely through finding a remote location. Mt. Hieisan, the center for the Tendai sect (the other major exponent of the Esoteric doctrine), was located in the mountains overlooking the capital. Accused of political meddling, the Tendai sect was banished and temples were burned entirely to the ground. As a frontier establishment, Koyasan was able to avoid most of the political disruption which destroyed many other budding religious orders.

Probably the most significant aspect of the climate of Koyasan was its contrast with the lowlands of the capital and the Nara plains. Thus, the climate was possibly another factor in the consideration of site selection.

"As glorious as a sea of clouds seen below from a high peak at day break." was another metaphor used by Kukai to describe an aspect of Shingon philosophy, and perhaps a literal reference to his fondness for Mt. Koya. Clouds and mist are a part of the mysterious character of Koyasan. High ridges and thick vegetation seem to lure wispy clouds, which change in a moment the mood of the valley – dark and grey, then suddenly radiant and clear.

As the Shingon discipline expressed austerity and simplicity, the climatic conditions would have contributed to its rigorous practice. The severe cold of winter may have discouraged followers with less conviction. Perseverance in the sub-freezing conditions must have demanded an additional degree of commitment and dedication.

The difference in climate also affected the quality of native vegetation. Found in the Koyasan region is a distinctly temperate vegetation community quite unlike the sub-tropical plants of the capital. Kukai wrote of the transient quality of the beautiful yet short-lived flowers in the capital, and then went on to praise the enduring nature of the mountain stream.

Kukai's choice of Mt. Koya as his religious outpost would seem to be based upon the functional aspects — a remote flatland with available resources and the qualitative features, an austere and rugged landscape, and a self-enclosed inward space visually isolated and independent from the surrounding landscape.

### Site Construction

The temple sits in the middle of what was once a stream bed. An underground conduit has been built to accommodate the heavy storm run off. Cold air has a tendency to move down the stream channels at night and in the early hours of the effects of this cold air movement exaggerated. But since the practice of Shingon involves self-discipline and the sensory exposure to the elements, perhaps this is a deliberate device to motivate the initiate towards greater conviction. There is no interior heating (except for a central hibachi in a few of the rooms) and the walls provide little insulation.

### Site Adaptations

It is significant that Koyasan is not referred to as a complex of buildings but rather as the entire region. It was Kukai's contention that mountains were means for reaching Higan (paradise). “[The mountains] are like bridges for the masses” as well as being inherently sanctified. The rugged and wild landscape of Mt. Koya captured the spirit of Kukai's image of heaven. This is consistent with his belief that heaven existed as the original nature of things.

The assumed objectives of Kukai were to supply a total composition of symbolic elements which were intended to generate a certain mental and physical response. With the multi-sensory barrage, the initiate was confronted with a reality which was invented. Symbolic imagery, evident from detail to regional dimensions, was utilized. The reality was perceived by the initiate because it was physically demonstrated.

Kukai's primary incentive for establishing Koyasan was to provide an unencumbered retreat for those who wished to practice meditation (shuzen dojo). However, an aspirant who chose to attend the temple monastery of Koyasan was confronted with a rigorous schedule of spiritual discipline: the most emphasized being the practice of meditation. The education of the aspirant was both a passive process and an active one. Much of the essential dogma was neither written nor spoken and such was to be intuitively perceived through a variety of sensory media. Other principles were experienced through rites or rituals. A variety of magical practice were performed, thus adding a very aggressive feature to the discipline. A point of speculation is whether the recipient of the multi-leveled indoctrination could resist its tempting metaphors and engrossing practices.

Most of the tall conifer stands which typify its present-day appearance did not exist in its early days. Needle-bearing trees such as the *Cryptomeria japonica*, *Chamaecyparis obtusa*, *Sciadopitys verticillata*, *Abies firma* and *Pinus densiflora* were all introduced into the Koya region for both aesthetic and functional purposes. These species represented the lumber resource for construction throughout Japan. It may perhaps be deduced that the change in vegetation was consistent with a subtle change in the purveyors of the religion — that is, as the settlement became more established, the functional needs of the community outweighed the original aesthetic qualities of rugged and des-

plate wilderness, which had initially drawn the religious followers to Koyasan. There is still a forest, yet tempered more as a park.

Early records indicate that there were specific policies pertaining to the continuance of the forest character which were implemented by the individual monasteries and collectively by the entire religious establishment. The present character of the forests surrounding Koyasan thus is the result of stringent policies which have been in effect for a milleneum. Some of the controlling policies were:

(1) The vegetation was not an asset to be profited from that is, the vegetation could never be used as a commercial resource, as for selling purposes or for stockpiling. Thus plants of general commercial value were avoided, such as bamboo, fruit trees, and charcoal producing shrubs. A ditinction must have been made between the planting of types useful as resources for the construction and maintenance of temple structures from those determined to be of commercial value.

(2) Plants were to be replaced whenever cut. The priests has the responsibility to supervise the cutting of trees to ensure that care was taken.

(3) Except for special historical trees, selection of trees to be removed was based upon age and size, that is, the oldest, tallest trees were removed first.

(4) The physical character of the forest as a whole should be the first and most important consideration when deciding upon vegetation removal, thus, clear-cutting was always avoided.

(5) Special caution was to be observed when removing vegetation around the spring sources present within a region. This had a double intention: That of preserving the valuable water supplies for the community, as severe cutting could cause erosion which might ruin the spring source, and secondly, some of the most outstanding trees were to be found near the spring areas, probably due to the continuous water sustenance.

(6) The species of *Cryptomeria* and *Chamaecyparis* were to have the highest priority when replanting was undertaken for aesthetic and functional reasons. These two species were most valued because of their great construction potential. They were the most frequently planted when an existing tree was removed. As previously stated, the pre-settlement character was entirely void of conifer vegetation and thus this practice may have been the most significant in the transformation of Koyasan's character.

The area around Kukai's place of entombment, Okunoin, one of the most sacred centers of the settlement, was to be left in its wild natural character. It was preserved as a symbolic vestige of the primordial landscape of Koyasan. During the Meiji Period (late 1800's), all but a small segment of the Okunoin vegetation was cut, thus leaving an even smaller remnant of the indigenous vegetation. Perhaps a more functional purpose for the preservation of this natural area was that the natural vegetation served more effectively as a storm wind buffer than the introduced species. The location of the natural area coincided with the path of the most intense storms.

The earliest recorded planting occurred in 1012 with the establishment of a stand of *Chamaecyparis*. From that time, there have been recurrent plantings, primarily of the six above-mentioned species.

The vegetation has provided a wide range of resources to the inhabitants of Koya. Choice building resources for tools and utensils, decorations for temples, herbal resources for rites, medicinal herbs for cures and treatments, and a wide range of food staples came from the plants which surrounded the settlement.

### Conclusion

As there has been a focus on three aspects of Koyasan — the environment, the philosophy, and the forms, the conclusion will regard each one separately.

#### KOYASAN : A Living Work of Art

Shingon art is an expression of piety. To make a beautiful work of art is providing a personal inspiration to the public. To make a religious art image is the communion with a symbol behind the image. Thus, the art's creation internalizes the apiritual message. Shingon as a religion of sensory imagery was entirely dependent upon the sensory depictions of its concepts. Art expression thus assumed the role of the primary means of conveyance — including painting, sculpture, music, literature, gestures, rites and architecture. Koyasan can be viewed as a composite of art forms, all of which serve to express aspects of Shingon. Symbolism existed in the slope of a roof, the shape of a stone, and the gesture of a hand. The vitality and life emerged in the continuance of the symbolic tradition.

The experiential approach of Shingon discipline had a tremendous impact upon cultural development in Japan. The arts having captured an essential aspect of the religion, they added the dimension of profound contemplation to an already refined set of aesthetics. The artisan, even when creating an object for mundane function partakes in an act which is evoked from a spiritual base.

#### KOYASAN : A Natural Preserve

The character of the landscape of Mt. Koya was a fundamental ingredient of the Shingon experience. It was the mood, character, and sanctuary. It served as a model for inspiration. The temple of Mt. Koya was not a single structure or building complex but rather the region. The desecration of the land and vegetation was thus a desecration of the temple itself.

The guiding policies and tradition have continued the practice of (1) adaptive architecture, (2) building beneath the summit and ridge, (3) controlled building height, (4) blending cultured plants with the natural vegetation, (5) planting with natives, (6) preservation of symbolic planting, (7) protective zoning of fragile areas, such as springs, (8) careful plant removal — no clear-cutting, and (9) reforestation with creative use of its unique resources.

The comprehensive and yet supranational system of organization, site arrangement, and design vigilance viewed without its metaphysical basis still implants a coherent pattern upon the landscape - - - one of balance rather than competition, one of limited scale and boundary, yet not static and monotonous. The continuity through time rather than suggesting dormancy or quiescence demonstrated a dynamic vitality able to continue despite the resistance of adverse physical and cultural forces.

#### KOYASAN : The Physical Manifestation of an Ideal

Koyasan represents the physical artifacts of a religious philosophy. It is the artifact or evidence from which were surmised aspects of the philosophy. Its function was to convey a certain quality of "place". The means of creating this quality was through the total composition of its symbolic elements. The total composition included the regional configuration of the landscape as well as the sensitive brushwork on a wall. Within this composition is perceived a compatibility between art, nature, and people who adhere to its discipline.

### Acknowledgement

With our sincere gratitude, we would like to make a special acknowledgement to Dr. Tadashi Kubo, Emeritus Professor at the University of Osaka Prefecture, for his kind suggestions to this study, and also like to thank the Professors at the University of California, Berkeley; Mr. Garrett Eckbo, Mr. Michael Laurie and Mr. David Gates; who discussed the directions and contents of original papers of this study and jurried the resultants.

### References

- 1) HAKEDA, Y., (1972). *Kukai*. Columbia University Press.
- 2) SAUNDERS, E. D., (1972). *Buddhism in Japan*. Charles E. Tuttle Company.
- 3) JUNG, C. G., (1973). *Mandala Symbolism*. Princeton University Press.
- 4) KATSUNO, R., (1966). *Hieizan and Koyasan*.
- 5) KITANO, R., (1956). *Koyasan*. Koyasan-Shuppansha.