

## 「Kouya-san Temples Tour」

We, some 10 members of Shimada Sonjuku and Shimada juku, visited Koya-san Temples spending two days of autumn national holidays, October 10 and 11. It was a wonderful trip. We were very much impressed by the special atmosphere of the mountains, campuses of temples, observations of many national and religious treasures, and participation to services and listening to lectures, and also rare opportunities to discuss issues of our interest with some high priests.

Koya-san Temples celebrate this special year 2015 as the 1200 year anniversary of the initiation of Koya-san Temples by the founder, priest Kukai who is later respected and cherished by the name of Kobo Daishi until today. We were lucky to be able to visit Koya-san Temples at this special time and enjoy specially arranged wonderful program. All this arrangement was done by our friend, Ms.Hine, Kagari, office of Wakayama prefecture. We are also thankful to the governor, Mr. Nisaka, Yoshinobu, of Wakayama prefecture for his continuous support and encouragement for our Shimada Sonjuku and Shimada-juku activities relating to this area.

Kukai or Kobo Daishi is indeed a special priest who, in my view, established genuine Buddhism in Japan after having learned essence of Buddhism in China and as far back to India. Since Koya-san Temples have been designated as the World Cultural Heritage in 2004, and much is written even in English, I will not spend space to explain important historical facts and interpretations about Koya-san Temples and the great priest Kukai. Rather, I would like to focus in this essay only on our direct experience during our tour to Koya-san temples.

### Niutsu-Hime Shrine

On October 10, we took the plane leaving Haneda airport early in the morning 7:15am which arrives at Kansai International airport at 8:35. We then got on a chartered bus and drove to Koya-san. At the foot of Koya-san, and at the entry port of it, we plan to visit an important shrine, called Niutsu Hime shrine.

We arrived at Niutsu Hime Shrine. This shrine is located at the foot of Kouya-san mountains. There is a well known legend story of this temple in

relation with Kouya-san temples. That is as follows. When the priest Kukai is attempting to climb the Koya-san mountains, he passed by this place. He was welcomed by a white dog and the dog guided Kukai to reach the destination Kukan wanted to reach. In fact, the dog was the embodiment of brother of Niutsu Hime, the prince of Niutsu Hime to whom the shrine is dedicated.

The shrine is a complex of invaluable historic buildings whose origins go back to ancient era of 1700 years ago. The buildings are surrounded by woods of huge cedars and Japanese cypress. The shrine is well known for its arch shaped bridges, a big and a small. The big one is viewed as a symbol of this shrine because of its splendid outlook, its shape and bright red color. Unfortunately, this bridge was in the process of repair and was covered by the shelter and we were unable to see.

In the main building, a wedding ceremony was being held which was conducted by the chief priest of this shrine, Mr. Niu, Koichi, whom we made an appointment to learn about the shrine from him. We waited for half an hour until he completed the ceremony.

After completion, he welcomed us and showed us around the whole shrine, and guided us to the special exhibition of shrine treasures. In the treasure house, there were a dozen or so of treasures which are either national treasures or important cultural heritage. Indeed, the Koya-san temples including Buddhist temples of Koya-san, Niu shrine, and Jison-in temple are designated as the World Cultural Heritage by UNESCO committee in 2004.

The main reason for the designation is this is extremely unique combination of Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines, two different religions, co-exist peacefully. He added that this peaceful co-existence was once threatened by the Meiji government in their campaign of suppressing Buddhism at the beginning of Meiji era. However, the tradition of peaceful co-existence and cooperation has been protected and preserved by the effort of Koya-san people.

While guiding us, he talked about the history of the shrine with a much broader perspective of the era when the shrine was originated. His story was extremely interesting for us to understand the ancient history of

Japan, with special reference of the role that this area, which is now represented mostly by the area of Wakayama prefecture.

Listening to his story, we realize that the area of Wakayama prefecture, which covers the South west part of the large Kii peninsula, in fact, played an important role to make up the country of Japan in ancient era, perhaps more important than the well known historic cities like Nara and Kyoto.

Wakayama prefecture is proud of having historic and cultural sites which are designated as World Cultural Heritage. The Koya-san temples, which we were going to visit is one and Kumano Kodo, or old paths in Kumano mountains is another. Mr. Niu is unsatisfied the way the UNESCO committee and the Japanese who were excited by the designation of the UNESCO committee interpret the meaning and significance of Kumano Kodo because they recognize the old mountain paths simply as paths running through the preserved nature of woods in the Kumano mountains.

Mr.Niu wants people to understand that these paths are doorways to reach important shrines like Niutsu-Hime shrine which played important roles in the ancient mystical era, and temples which led the ancient civilization of Japan like Koya-san temples. The fact that many of such historic sites exist in Wakayama prefecture tells an important and interesting stories of the origins of formation of ancient Japan and Japan's ancient civilization.

He joined us at lunch which we took at a restaurant nearby which is famous for its historical episodes. The restaurant is run by Ms. Hikari Kyakuden, the historically famous name. She is highly talented lady not only in cuisine but also in other cultural areas. She prepared a wonderful lunch using materials taken in the neighborhood.

Since I was much impressed by the stories of Mr.Niu, I asked question about "Haibutsu Kishaku," the anti-Buddhist movement in early Meiji era led by the new Meiji government. He gave us a comprehensive analysis and explanation about the reasons for this movement and its consequences.

Faced with the menace of foreign powers as represented by, for example, the case of the black fleet, the Meiji government thought it is necessary to single out Japanese unique religion and create an

environment in which people are willing to believe in it so that they will be guarded against the penetration of Christianity. The government chose “Shinto” ,the Japanese native religion, and suppressed Buddhism.

Because of this suppression, many Buddhist temples and priests suffered. In the case of Koya-san temples, most of economic assets such as paddy fields for raising rice were confiscated by the government, temples were destroyed, and priests lost employment. Indeed, Koya-san temples had at their peak time some 1100 temples on the Koya-san mountain but currently only 117.

I asked about the nature of belief worshiping Dainichi Nyorai(mahavairocana) which is the single grand Buddha in the universe for the Shingon sect advocated by Kukai. My question was whether the Shingon Buddhism is in its essence “monotheism” like Christianity or Islam rather than monotheism as commonly believed. Mr.Niu gave us his own comprehensive explanation which is quite philosophical.

It is really rare to meet this kind of Shinto priest who is outspoken about the history, religious doctrines, and religious policies. Many high priests of Shinto I have met did not seem to be willing to talk or discuss these matters. My impression so far is that priests of Shinto have been silent perhaps due to the effect of Shinto order by the SCAP (Supreme commander of allied forces) which was issued shortly after the WWII ordering to dismantle the special status of Shinto given by the prewar governments and even meant to suppress Shinto accusing their role to support the militaristic Japan.

Quite contrary to the common tendency of many of Shinto priests, Mr. Niu is outspoken, and explains his view with clear and sharp expressions. We asked him to come to one of our study meetings in Tokyo to give his lecture for us. He agreed to join us in the near future.

This has been an interesting and exciting beginning of our visit of Kouya-san Temples.

Daimon(Great Gate)

Having driven a mountain slope by a bus for 15minutes for the distance

of about 20km, we arrived at Daimon, or the great gate, which is the entrance to the broad campus or most appropriately could be called “city” of Koya-san temples. The gate is the red colored huge building. This is the entrance to the temples area and at the same time the last point to be able to see the sceneries outside of the temple city. Since the temple city is located at the height of Koya-san mountains which is about 800m high, once we step into the city, outside sceneries couldn't be seen being shuttered by high trees which surround the temple city.

The temple city is approximately 4 km west to east and 2 km south to north. There exist currently 117 temples which have long histories and ample episodes. Thousands of priests and monks live, work, train and lean there. Also, thousands of people who support the operation of the city such as shoppers, carpenters, drivers, and so forth live and work there.

Mr. Chabara, Toshiki, a priest, guided us around the campus starting from the great gate. He said that this gate is unique among many gates of other temples in the sense that the gate faces the direction of west whereas most gates of other temples face south. He asked us the reason why. No one of us gave a correct answer. The answer is that the gate is designed to face the west heavens which were believed to exist in the broad region of India, where the Buddhism was originated.

#### Danjoh Garan(Up Stage Great Temples)

This is a set of representative temples of Koya-san Temples: such as konpon Daitou, or fundamental great tower, Kondo or Golden Temple, Miyashiro or sacred shrine and others. The expression of “Danjo” or up stage is used to mean that all these temples and shrines are built on the campus somewhat higher than the common ground, according to Mr. Chabara, Toshiki, an officer of “future division” of Koya town who guided us around this area. Indeed, when we step up to walk into the campus and look up the huge buildings, we tend to be overwhelmed by their grand view. The tower, for example, is 48 meters high. Since it stands to the sky with shining red color, it certainly is gorgeous.

In Kondo or golden temple, the principal deity is Dainichi Nyorai(mahavairocana), the supreme Buddha who created the whole universe and the principal Buddha of Shingon esoteric Buddhism which

Kukai introduced from China and developed much in Japan. The building of this temple was burnt 100 years ago, and the deity was repaired using raw Japanese cypress trees. Since the sculpture of the Buddha was concealed in small shrine box for the last 80 years, the color of raw cypress trees has been maintained amazingly well in its original color somewhat like the color of human skin. The sculpture is exhibited to the public only during several months of this 1200 year anniversary period. We were extremely lucky to be able to see directly this holy figure of the deity.

Incidentally, our friend who joined on the way our group, Mr. Suzuki, Tanose, told us that his family donated offertory boxes to two of the temples. They certainly were well constructed gorgeous ones. I missed to ask him why it was possible for his family to donate them to such famous temples where many eminent people and successful companies wish to donate.

#### Kongo Buji(Diamond Temple)

We, then proceeded to visit Kongo Buji, Diamond Temple. The name Kongo Buji is now used to represent all the temples of the height of Koyasan mountains. However, to be exact, this name is to express two combined temples, which used to be called Seiganji temple and Kouzanji temple.

In Kongo buji, the deity of the sculpture of the image of Kobo Daishi himself is preserved. Again, this is a rare opportunity to see it directly. We worshiped the figure of Kobo Daishi.

Also annexed with this temple is a beautiful garden with white small stones on the ground, good shaped rocks, surrounded by well kept trees. Since the season is autumn, many of the trees turned to yellow and red. Mr. Chabara told us when it frosts, the colors of trees turn into bright red all through. We were a little bit earlier for that timing.

#### Tokugawa Reidai(Tokugawa Shogun Cemetery)

On the way to go to the inn where we plan to stay over the night, we dropped by the cemetery of Tokugawa Shogunate. There were two buildings for the first and second Shoguns of Tokugawa family to preserve their spirits. Since the timing was after the usual public visits, the cemetery was quiet. We thought of the history of feudal era of Japan.

## Shukubo(Buddist Inn)- Renge Joh-In

We arrived at Shukubo or Buddhist Inn by the name of Renge Joh-In. This inn was built as the inn for Sanada family, the famous and powerful warrior and feudal lord who governed the area currently a part of Nagano prefecture around Ueda city. During the war ridden time of 16 century, Sanada Yukimura was known throughout Japan as a very skillful, wise and powerful war leader. Since he and his son joined Toyotomi group who lost the war to determine the hegemony of feudal Japan, they stayed in this inn for some time after the war.

The inn is well maintained. Facilities were excellent. I was thinking of much shabby facility for Buddhist inns of Koya-san. On the contrary, this inn is of the high class Japanese traditional hotels in its amenity and comfort which it provides.

At 6 pm, we were invited to attend the session of meditation. We are supposed to sit in the "Seiza" posture, which is to sit up straight with one's legs folded underneath. The chief priest, Mr. Soeda, Ryusho, taught us that the most important is breathing. Breath in slowly and breach out slowly, concentrate all the attention to breathing so that you can feel the air coming into upper body to down to the whole body and then feel the air going out of the body. We had to do this for more than half an hour. Since we are not used to sit in this way, it was in fact quite hard to survive the challenge.

At about 7 pm, dinner is ready. Meal at Buddhist facility is called, "Shojin cuisine" which does not use any ingredient taken from animals or fish because Buddhism prohibits to kill creatures which have lives. Most of materials are only vegetables, yet, the meals were quite tasty. Liquor is allowed. We took fair amount of Japanese saka and beer with joy.

After the dinner, we were told that Mr. Soeda, Ryusho, the chief priest of the Renge Joe-In will give us an opportunity to have discussion. This is a very special offer indeed particularly Mr. Soeda is in effect the chief priest administering the entire temples of Koya-san. We quickly took a hot bath which was very relaxing and went down stairs to a cozy small room where we are supposed to meet Mr.Soeda.

## Evening Talk Session by the Chief Priest Mr. Soeda, Ryusho

He stepped into the room and welcomed us. Surprisingly, he prepared tea for all of us. He also served us a tiny sweet cake to go with tea, which is called Miroku-ishi. Miroku-ishi is made by this temple. The cake is named after the belief that some 5.6 billion years ahead in the future, Kukai or Kobo Daishi will meet Miroku-bosatsu, or Miroku-bodhisattva, and some long time ago, a meteorite fell from the universe or the heaven to Koya-san, which is a pre-signal of the future coming of Miroku-bosatsu. The cake was good taste.

He started his talk with us by telling how the main temples of the Koya-san were built, re-built and have been maintained. Kobo-Daishi started building the temples from Danjoh-Garan or the up stage temples. The great tower building is 48 m high which is about the same height with Todaiji Temple located in Nara which contains the huge bronze statue of Buddha. It costly to maintain such a huge construction. When repaint it, it takes 100 million yen just to construct scaffolding and 300 million yen for the paint. Since the top of the tower is a sharp iron pillar, it is susceptible for thunder attack.

Soon after it was completed nearly 1200 years ago, it was burned down by thunder storm, and was rebuilt by Taira, Tadamori, and his son, Taira Kiyomori, who became the most powerful aristocrate coming out of the class of Samurai in Heian era. The temple buildings were burned down or destructed by many hazards like storms and fires. However, they were rebuilt with help of powerful leaders of the era. Many leaders of the time, including the emperor, aristocrats, samurai or warriors, merchants and so forth contributed to the Koya-san temples perhaps because they wanted to have or maintain some connections with Kobo-Daishi.

Here, I asked his view about the suppression of Buddhism by the Meiji Government at the beginning of Meiji era. He told us a quite persuasive explanation. When the black fleet required Tokugawa government to open the country, the Japanese leaders felt the possible danger of aggression by the west powers. They thought it was necessary to restore the genuine Japan which is the country of Gods.



While the Japanese have long had the tradition to believe in native religion, which is Shinto, Buddhism which came from abroad and penetrated deeply into Japan and Japanese minds and built a superior positioning in Japanese society above Shinto. The Meiji government leaders felt a keen need to suppress and weaken Buddhism and in contrast play up Shinto to make the Japanese population realize and believe in Shinto in order to restore the genuine Japan which has as its spiritual backbone, Shinto.

Once the leaders of the southern clans took power and established the Meiji government, they immediately started to suppress Buddhism. They even adopted nasty tactics to corrupt Buddhism such as letting women step into Koya-san, solicited to have hair on priests' skin head, encouraged marriage, recommended to eat meat, wear clothes of commoners stripping away priest traditional wears and the like.

More seriously, the government abolished "Han", the land of feudal lord, and in place introduced the new administrative regions "Ken." And at the same time, the government confiscated the land which Buddhist temples owned. Because of this confiscation, Koya-san Temples lost 230000 koku equivalent of farm land, which virtually destroyed the fiscal capacity of Koya-san temples. Incidentally, the unit, "koku" is the amount of rice which is good enough to feed one person for a year during Edo era.

Mr. Koshiba, Masahiro, asked a question about the relations and difference between Kukai's Dainichi Nyorai(mahavairocana) and The Buddha in India. Mr. Soeda gave us a comprehensive picture of religious belief about the historical evolution of this ultimate image of Buddha in relating the era of Shakyamuni in ancient India of some 2500 years ago and Kukai's concept of Daiichi Nyorai which was envisaged in some 1200 years ago.

He started out by mentioning that there had been an old tradition or practice in Buddhist school led by Shakyamuni as to not describe the concept by sentences. They rather communicate and share the concept by talking without explicitly writing. This had a merit of enhancing one's memory capability. There is an episode that when Kukai was young and attending university hoping to become a government officer, he met a priest who gave him a special text teaching the reader how to enhance the memory capability. This text may most likely be in the tradition of the

above practice of religious monks in ancient India.

They talked and memorized many things including important religious precepts without writing in sentences. It took 500 years when people began to use letters and sentences to write down such thoughts and concepts. In the period of 500 years, things change. The society gets more complex, may suffer from human and natural disasters such as wars and floods.

The precepts which worked well 500 years ago may not fit the environment of 500 years later. Gradually, religious people began to think that it is necessary to integrate various concepts which were mutually contradictory and confused. The words they began to use are the words for the purpose of communications.

On the contrary, in the old testament of Christianity, Johannes pointed out that everything starts from "Logos" or words. Indeed, the whole universe is a logos. The universe is full of words of the God.

It may be possible to interpret that Kukai arrived at this concept of universe by his own training when he was young.

As the society changes with passage of time as long as hundreds of years, religious leaders gradually began to think that the religion should have a new role to save people who are agonizing by wars, famines, diseases and many other hardships. In the large religious school of Hindu, Buddhism is a rather small sect. In Buddhism, religious leaders thought that letting Shakyamuni hold a role to save the devastated people. This is a new mission given to Shakyamuni which has some commonality with Kukai's Dainichi Nyorai (mahavairocana).

As time passed, the society experienced many natural hazards as well as human hazards, most notably violent conflicts and wars. Worriers, who believe in religions such as Hindu or Buddhism, sometimes had to kill with each other even though they are relatives or families.

Religious leaders of Hindu thought of new gods or empowered the existing gods who are equipped with the capability of saving those who killed relatives or family members for unescapable reasons from not falling

into the hell and possibly go to the heaven. In Buddhism, such Buddha have been thought of as Amitabha. Particularly, in Mahayana Buddhism, the grand Buddha is equipped with such a capability. Such Buddha is thought of as the divine creator of everything in the universe and viewed as the god of the Sun. In view of such ultimate images of the god, we may see some commonality between Kukai's Dainichi Nyorai(mahavairocana) and Shakyamuni of Indian Buddhism.

I asked Mr.Soeda why Kukai was able to communicate well with Chinese priests, and how he learned Chinese of that level within relatively short period of time without having sophisticated tools to learn language.

Mr. Soeda said that there must have been many native Chinese in Japan even in those days. In fact, there are ample evidence that there lived many Korean people in Japan in those years. There were many Japanese who spoke Korean, and by the same token, there must have been many Japanese who spoke Chinese. Kukai lived in an age when learning Chinese in Japan was possible.

I asked a question about the reason why Kukai and Saicho, who initiated Tendai sect in Japan utilizing Enryaku temple built in the Hiei-zan mountains, departed away with each other after some years of close and cooperative relations.

Mr.Soeda underlined that Kukai experienced a special religious enlightenment when he was training himself as a young learning monk. And this was the reason why the Chinese leading priest of Shingon mikkyo, or Shingon esoteric Buddhism, Qin Guo, noticed that Kukai should be his successor immediately after they met for the first time. This was because they share the special sensitivity to know the things which only Buddha knows.

Saicho is a highly clever and capable priest. He has an inclination that everything can be understood by studying. Kukai believes that there are things in the world that one can not understand by studying only. There are things, one can understand only after by experiencing spiritual enlightenment. This disparity of their philosophy and methodology made the two outstanding priests began to confront with each other.

## Morning Religious Service and Talk by the Chief Priest

Early in the morning at 6 o'clock, we were supposed to get together in the pray room of the inn. I got up much earlier and spent sometime reading some relevant documents. Since this is at the top of Koya-san mountains which is about 800m high, it was fairly cold. Temperature was about 7 to 8 degree centigrade, which is almost 10 degrees lower than down town cities. While yesterday was fair sky, this morning the sky was cloudy and at times light rains.

The pray room was fairly dim with only candle lights and was quite crowded by the quests who stayed over the night. Now, religious morning service will start. Shortly after 6 o'clock, young monks started to sing ancient religious Buddhist songs with slow and unique melodies. It is the rule that the youngest and least experienced monk will have to start voicing and others follow, and then the chief priest start the part with religious verse. While listening, we are invited to a special world of meditation. The singing of religious songs with religious messages lasted for about half an hour.

After this, the chief priest gave an anecdotal speech to make us realize that we are living together with spirits of Buddha. The chief priest, Mr. Soeda, introduced at the beginning five episodes which tell us that we have to realize invisible relations with our family members or friends who died during daily life by some little happenings. He said that we, alive people in the real society, do not see the dead people but the dead people can see and actually watch our life and actions.

In "Bon" festival in summer when we invite the spirits of ancestors to join us to eat and enjoy together spiritual meeting with them signifies our relations with ancestors which we do not usually think explicitly. After having spent half an hour talking many episodes, he summed up his speech by telling that religious practices differ country to country and by age. In fact this is the wisdom of people to change themselves to adapt to new and changed environments.

There were quite a few non-Japanese audience. Mr. Soeda, kindly spoke all of his speech using English after he finished speech in Japanese. He is so fluent and provides exactly the same content in English too. Last night,

we asked how he trained his English. He smiled and said, he has to give speeches to the quests usually 300 times in a year, therefore, he is bound to memorize English expressions by heart.

#### Koya-san Reihoukan (Treasure Museum of Koya-san)

At about 8:30, we arrived at Koya-san Treasure Museum. Luckily, weather changed to half fair sky with some mild temperature. We were welcomed by the chief director of the museum, Mr. Shizuka, jien, who spent his whole life in Koya-san and after serving at Koya-san university for sometime, he got the assignment to administer the treasure museum.

He guided us around the whole exhibitions of the museum. On the way, he pointed out that the most sculpture of the images of Buddha are not that big. They are more or less the same size of ordinary people. This is because i Shingon esoteric Buddhism which was introduced from China and was developed markedly by Kukai at Koya-san teaches that you could become Buddha while being alive if you experience special spiritual enlightening, Buddha images are made as similar as people.

He said that the treasure museum holds approximately 23000 items, many of which are either national treasures or important cultural heritages. While the job of keeping correct track of all these is extremely laborious work, the most serious threat is the effect of mold which grows easily in this woody moist mountain environment and degrade the quality of treasures with time.

#### Oku-no-In(Inner Depth Temple)

One of the high lights of our visit of Koya-an Temples is to visit this inner depth temple. It is because this temple is the place Kukai closed his life in the actual world but is believed to continue to be alive as Kobo Daishi, Kobo the great priest, and helps people wherever and whenever they need the help of the great Buddha.

There is a rather long door way to reach Oku-no-In or inner depth temple for about a couple of miles. There are three bridges which cross over three streams. Passing each bridge, we are supposed to purify ourselves because we need to be highly purified situation to come close to

the temple where Kobo Daishi is believed to live.

Much of the door way is paved well with stones. On both sides of the door way path, there are many gravestones keeping either bones of the dead ancestors or respecting their spirits. Interesting is that almost all of the famous historic figures such as Shoguns of feudal era, outstanding Samurais, or high rank aristocrats. More interesting is that many of successful business leaders and powerful business companies in modern times and today have their grave stones. Koya-san has a unique policy to accept most people who want their grave yard here regardless of their religions or religious sects have grave stones in this cemetery and thus maintain a broad support of the entire society.

Shoshin-gu(Delivering meal to Kobo Daishi)

We were lucky to witness the ritual of serving meal to Kobo Daishi. Everyday, they conduct this ritual twice one in the early morning of 6:00 for breakfast and the other in late morning for lunch. The late morning service is conducted at 10:30 when we meant to arrive at the Oku-no-In. A few priest lead a chest which is carried by two monks to climb the ladder and bring it to the inner room of the Oku-no-In.

Mr. Yabu, Kunihiko, who plays a critical role in arranging 1200th anniversary of Koya-san Temples as a division chief of the organizing committee, explained that the meal delivered to Kobo Daishi consists of 7 dishes including rice and soup bowls. Usually, young and less experienced monks are required to prepare meals in turn. This provides good training opportunity for them. After watching the service, we went down to basement which is the closest place we can approach to Kobo Daishi.

Kobo Daishi determined to complete at age of 62 as an alive person by shutting himself in the basement of the inner temple. This deed is named, "nyujoh" which is different from ordinary death. Targeting to the final day, he gradually reduced the amount and frequency of food taking, and finally stopped to take even water to prepare to depart from the actual world. Several days after he completed this event, his high student visited the temple and opened the door of the basement, he found that Kobo Daishi sitting there with increased beard.

This story was quickly carried to the society and eventually gave rise to the legend of Kobo Daishi who is alive and move around the country to save people. The title of “Daishi” is a special title given to exceptionally respected grand priest by the emperor. So far only a few priests were given this title. The title “Kobo Daishi” was given to priest Kukai by Emperor Daigo in 921, 86 years after his “nyu-joh.”

#### Lunch at Yukimura-an

We had a wonderful lunch at the foot of Koya-san mountains at restaurant Yukimura-an. This is the restaurant known for “soba,” Japanese noodles fostered in Ueda city is Nagano-prefecture, which is known for the home land of popular warrior and lord, Sanada, Yukimura. We enjoyed not only soba but also various delicious food as well as Japanese sake and beer. While in the Koya-san mountains, we were overwhelmed by the special atmosphere, precious opportunity of observing cultural heritages and valuable teaching and lectures. With some feeling of liberation from all this, we enjoyed the lunch a lot, and consequently I gained quite a bit of weight.

#### Jison-In(Jison-temple)

After lunch, we visited Jison-In temple. This is well known for the temple where mother of Kukai lived for some years. Since Koya-san mountains prohibited females to step into the mountains, Kukai’s mother stayed in the temple outside of the mountain area. Kukai, who cherish and respect his mother, is said to have visited mother many times. To describe the high frequency of his visits, an expression of nine times a month is used. This temple is known nowadays to have special benefit to protect females from breast cancer if they worship the temple.

We arrived at the temple somewhat later than our planned timing and so many people were gathering at the campus, the chief priest who offered guidance for us some time earlier was unable to welcome us by person. We nevertheless worked and looked around well the whole temple. Then, suddenly, the chief priest had given us a tray full of fresh persimmon. It was delicious. Thanking the good will of chief priest and his son, we shared persimmons also with other visitors.

This was the final planned visit of our tour of Koya-san temples. We

returned home by bus and bullet train with a special feeling of learning and happiness.

Finally, let me thank once again the great work of Ms. Hine, Kagari, to plan and arrange this whole trip, Mr. Soeda, Ryusho, Mr. Niu, Koichi and many other priests and the staff of Koya-san temples and Koya town for their kind guidance and valuable teachings.