

The Philosophical Research Society, Inc.

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Dear Friends:

As many of you may already know, I made a short trip to Japan this Spring, arriving in Tokyo on May 1st. The trip was extremely successful, and through the cooperation of Japanese friends, I was able to fulfill my cherished desire to visit Mt. Koya. I hope to prepare an article for our Journal dealing with this amazing place, as there seems to be very little information available in English, except for an article that appeared in the National Geographic Magazine in 1912.



We made the trip from Kyoto by automobile and arrived at Mt. Koya in approximately four hours. Until recently visitors made use of a cable car to reach the summit. Now, however, there is a new toll road, which winds in and out along the edges of precipitous cliffs. This road makes it possible to reach the town of Koya itself by automobile, and drive close to some of the more prominent temples.

Mt. Koya or Koyasan seems to have been named from the koya-maki, an umbrella fir tree, which reaches a height of from fifty to sixty-five feet. These trees mingle with the larger crytomeries, which grow to over 100 feet tall and some of which are said to be 35 feet in diameter. In the midst of a dense forest running along the crest of Mt. Koya are the sacred monasteries of the Shingon Sect. The top of the mountain is in the form of an irregular plateau, about two miles long. With a little imagination it is possible to liken the plateau to a lotus flower with eight petals. In the depression forming the center of the plateau, are the temples of this extraordinary religious community. In the days of its glory it is said that Mt. Koya contained nearly ten thousand glittering temples, and a population of ninety thousand monks and acolytes. Today, however, only a few of the ancient buildings remain. These, large and small, number about 250. At one time the priests were reduced in number to less than 300, but in recent years Koyasan has had a strong revival and there are now many new buildings, including a University, a Senior High School and a Cloister School.

Koyasan has been variously compared with the Monastery of the Greek Orthodox Church at Mt. Athos, the Acropolis of Athens, the Vatican at Rome and the Valhalla of Norse Mythology. It should also be mentioned that it contains an outstanding collection of Sacred Art, including numerous National Treasures of the Japanese Empire. Through

the gracious permission of the Emperor Saga, Koyasan was established as the principal seat of the Shingon Sect by the Venerable Priest Kobo Daishi in 816 A.D. It is closely associated with his life, and his Mausoleum is located amidst the ancient trees of Mt. Koya.

Beyond question, the most amazing feature of Koyasan is its Necropolis. It extends along the principal ridge of Mt. Koya for a distance of one and a half miles. Actually it borders a pleasant road that leads from the town of Koya to the Tomb of Kobo Daishi. Both sides of the road are lined with the familiar pagoda-shaped Buddhist memorial stones. They are as close together as is physically possible, and extend back on both sides of the thoroughfare for 200-300 feet. It is extremely difficult to photograph this City of the Dead, because of the heavy shade cast by the great trees. The largest of the ancient monuments is 28 feet in height, standing on a foundation 12 feet square. It was raised in the Tenth Century by one of the great Minamoto Shogun. Literally tens of thousands of great carved stones were brought up the steep path, which in ancient times was the only way of reaching the summit, and in at least one case progress was limited to three inches a day, and the setting up of the tomb actually required several years.

Nearly every important name in Japanese history has a monument at Mt. Koya and usually some small part of the ashes of the deceased person has been placed in this cemetery, to be as close as possible to the tomb of the great Saint. It is interesting, for example, that on this mountain is a monument to the assassin, the man he assassinated and the man who executed the assassin. Now all three lie buried together among the moss covered monuments at Koyasan. Here there are no longer friends nor enemies, but all sleep together under the benevolent care of Kobo Daishi's spirit.

As may be expected, the cemetery at Mt. Koya has come in the course of time to be completely filled and now a new road has been opened paralleling the ancient avenue and joining it before reaching Kobo's tomb. Along this new road many monuments have already been built, and I noticed several in the course of actual construction. Stone cutting is done on the site. The workmen first erect a tent of white cloth, under which they carry on their construction work, including actual sculpturing.

Advancing along the main road, the pilgrim or visitor crosses three narrow bridges, coming finally to a Memorial Hall in the cemetery. This hall is decorated on the inside with rows of lanterns, extending from floor to ceiling, and also suspended from the inside to the roof. The lanterns are lit, but the small flames provide only a glow in the darkness. The effect is most impressive.

Walking around behind this building, one stands in the presence of the Mausoleum of Kobo Daishi. It is a small structure, now concealed by a decorative wooden screen, so that the actual entrance to the Tomb is not visible. Once a year new robes are placed on the tomb, for it is believed that Kobo Daishi was buried alive and has been sitting in meditation in his tomb for more than a thousand years.

Since the new road has been opened, it is only a matter of time before Koyasan will become part of the modern world. This will not make a great difference, however, for even now faithful Buddhists of many denominations look forward to the spiritual consolation of joining in due time the multitude that sleeps in the shade of the ancient trees.

There are no hotels at Koyasan, not even a native Inn, but more than fifty temples



can provide lodgings for those who are willing to share the simple fare of the religious community. Visitors are encouraged to spend two or three days on the mountain, so that they can attend the early morning religious services and spend some leisure time viewing the treasures in the Temple Museums. Actually, the best way to see the Koyasan treasures is to wait until they are exhibited publicly in Tokyo or Kyoto, because at Mt. Koya only a few can be seen at any one time. The climatic condition is unfavorable for ancient works of art, so they are kept securely packed away for the greater part of the year.

Nearly all Japanese Buddhists venerate Kobo Daishi and a small folder issued at Koyasan reprints the vow of this saintly man: "As long as there is space, as long as there is a living being therein, and as long as there is Supreme Happiness to be attained, my vow to guide shall not be exhausted."

In May we cooperated with Mr. Tamoo Ogita in arranging a special exhibit of Japanese Art at Dana Park, Barstow, California. So far as we can learn, the exhibition - which was sponsored by several civic and educational groups of San Bernardino, Inyo and Mono Counties - was the first of its kind in the area. The exhibition was very well received and young people took a great interest in the dolls, fabrics, miniature ivory carvings and examples of old Japanese coins.

By the time you receive this Bulletin, my new book ADVENTURES IN UNDERSTANDING will be available and can be ordered for immediate delivery. The volume contains the notes of eight lectures. We have had numerous requests that these notes be made available for home study. This book considers many practical problems which we must all face in everyday living, and suggests ways to improve our relations with other people and our adjustments with life in general. This is an especially attractive gift book because of its simple and direct approach to situations and conditions nearly everyone has to meet.

As it appears that we are reaching the end of our allotted space, we will close this letter with kindest regards to you all, and most sincere appreciation for your help and encouragement through the years.

Always most sincerely,

Manly P. Hall

SPECIAL NOTICE FROM OUR BOOK DEPARTMENT

A number of important and scholarly volumes in our fields of interest are now available in attractive and accurate reprints. Most of those listed here are included in Mr. Hall's list of recommended reading and have long been rare and out of print. To these have been added selected works by outstanding modern authors. The Contributors' Bulletin will list additional books in future issues. Be sure to read this page carefully.

<u>Titles (continued)</u>	<u>Author</u>	<u>Retail</u>
Structure & Dynamics of the Psyche	Jung	\$6.00
Studies in the Middle Way	Humphreys	2.00
Sun Signs	Goodman	7.50
Symbolic & the Real	Progoff	6.00
Symbols of Transformation	Jung	5.00
Secret of the Golden Flower	Scholem	4.50
Serious Call to a Devout & Holy Life	Law	2.45
Secret Doctrine, Vols. I and II	Blavatsky	7.50
Stanzas from Dzyan	Blavatsky	1.50
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Holy Grail, The	Waite	10.00
Holy Kabbalah	Waite	10.00

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