

One Who Sees, One Who Hears All: The Stone Buddhist Statues of Ishiyama Kannon Park.

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知恵と慈悲に包まれて
—石山観音公園の石仏めぐり—

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【摘要】

世界遺産及び文化財のテーマに基づき、三重県指定文化財の石山観音を対象とした文化、宗教と自然を研究するプロジェクトである。生徒は自分たちの足と目と各自の感性で石仏群を観察、感じることによって、文化や宗教などを勉強と交流することを研究の一環として、取り組みました。また、本研究は文化を通じての国際交流促進も一つの目的と考えております。

※参考資料：石山観音公園のパンフレット〈魅惑の石仏めぐり〉

キーワード：石山観音、石仏像、磨崖仏、三重県指定文化財、国際交流

1. Introduction

Japanese and foreign students in my course, *Our World Heritage*, at Mie University, during the spring/summer session of 2015, were involved in a thematic course project that centered on a unique aspect of cultural heritage in Mie prefecture, the Buddhist stone statues of Ishiyama Kannon Park. The course project encompassed general research about Buddhism and Buddhist culture and custom in Japan. Following a half-day visit to Ishiyama Kannon Park, the students working together in teams made basic translations of the information from the Ishiyama Kannon Park pamphlet. While straight, word-for-word translations initiated the process, over the course of editing the student's work, I have included further translations, introductions and notes throughout in order to advance the narrative with relevant details outside the obligatory sets of facts, figures and dates. This paper not only incorporates an interpretation of the original Japanese language information pamphlet but also that of personal research including numerous observations of the sacred stone Buddhist statues of the Ishiyama Kannon pilgrimage route.

1-2. A Brief Note in Regards to Buddhism and Buddhism in Japan

Although not the first or the last to come of the great sages, Siddhartha Gautama, born the son of the ruler of a small kingdom at the foot of the Himalayas in present-day Nepal in 563 B.C., is revered as the historical Buddha, *the ultimate Truth*. Siddhartha Gautama was neither a spirit or a god, although, at the age of twenty-nine, he left behind his house and home in order to seek truth and salvation through mental and physical asceticism. As a religious monk and hermit for several years he tried, though unsuccessfully, to reach this ideal of eternal inner peace. Near death due to these excesses, it was only under successive meditation that he finally came to an understanding that a lack of control over one's behaviors, especially that of desire, was the root cause of the suffering that pervaded human existence. Abandoning self-mortification and adopting mental discipline and right living as his mantra, Gautama "the Buddha" became fully realized. For the last forty-five years of his eighty-year life, he practiced and preached a life not of ignorance but one of self-control and righteousness. His message was carried on by followers and organized into a religious philosophy, eventually splitting into two main schools of thought, the strictly traditional Theravada and that of the Mahayana, which holds that all sentient beings can achieve enlightenment through adherence to certain Buddhist principles. It is the Chinese Mahayana version that first took hold in Japan upon its introduction in the 6th century A. D. Over the centuries, the Japanese form of Mahayana has flourished especially through the influence of the four Japanese Buddhist sects of *Jodo*, *Shin*, *Zen* and *Nichiren* beginning in the 12th century A. D. (Kapleau, 1967, pgs. 324-327).

In Japanese Mahayana Buddhist thought and worship, the historical Buddha Gautama, while forever revered as the great teacher, had from the various movements within Japanese Buddhism during the Kamakura era (1185-1333 A. D.) given way in prominence to another Buddha, or Enlightened One, with the name of Amida Buddha, or Amitabha (original Sanskrit). If the historical Buddha Gautama was, "as a fully awakened, fully perfected human being who attained liberation of body and mind through his own human efforts and not by the grace of any supernatural being" (Kapleau, 1967, pg. 325), then it was the Amida Buddha who never set foot on earth. Rather, he has for time eternal, ruled over a paradise in the west, or Pure Land of Bliss, where he awaits the faithful upon their death. He is, in other words, a divine being, a transcendent extension of the historical Gautama Buddha

(Varley, 1977, pgs. 13-14, 69-73).

In the Mahayana school of Buddhism, a Bodhisattva is one who has attained enlightenment but postponed full-Buddhahood (true enlightenment) until all sentient beings can be saved from the ceaseless cycle of birth, death and rebirth. In Japanese Buddhist worship, the Jizo Bodhisattva and the Kannon Bodhisattva are regarded as two of the most important Bodhisattvas. The Jizo Bodhisattva is the guardian of children and the protector against evil spirits in the six realms of birth, death and rebirth. The Kannon Bodhisattva is known as the goddess of mercy, having the power to take different forms of life (thirty-three in all) in order to teach and assist all beings. Originally a male form named in Sanskrit as Avalokiteshvara, or “The Great Compassionate One”, the Japanese form has evolved over time into a female figure known by her name Kannon, or “One Who Sees, One Who Hears All” (Kapleau, 1967, pgs. 168-169, 324, 335). It is here at Ishiyama that the Amida Buddha, Jizo Bodhisattva, and the various forms of the Kannon Bodhisattva are consecrated in stone relief.

2-1. Ishiyama Kannon Park 石山観音公園

Ishiyama Kannon Park is located in a heavily forested area at the base of the Suzuka mountain range in the town of Geino, just outside the capital city of Tsu, in northwestern Mie prefecture. Ishiyama, or “Stone Mountain”, reaching a height of around 60 meters, was formed by white coarse granite with a layer of *kabuto* granite that has an estimated thickness of some 200 meters. The layer formed from geological upheavals during the Miocene epoch (dating from some twenty-three million up to five million years ago) and has undergone further changes due to natural forces.

Uma no Se (馬の背) refers to the crag like ridge extending south from the top of Ishiyama, where almost no plants or trees grow. It is called *Uma no Se* or “horseback ridge” as it resembles the figure of a horse bending its neck down to eat grass. It is in this area that the majority of the Ishiyama stone Buddhist statues can be found. The very top of Ishiyama provides a 360-degree view of the surrounding forest area, including the Suzuka mountain range, and the plains of Ano in the distance. On a clear day, it is possible to see the island of Kamishima in Ise Bay and the Chita peninsula across Ise Bay.

It was during the 2nd through 3rd year of the Heisei period (1990-1991) that Mie prefecture completed a restoration project to renovate and preserve the 4.83 hectares (11.93 acres) of land that comprises the area of Ishiyama Kannon. After the completion of several visitor related improvements, including reinforcing the pilgrimage path with natural stone and wood, the area of Ishiyama Kannon was officially declared Ishiyama Kannon Park.

2-2. The Six Forms of the Kannon Bodhisattva 六観音

There is good reason why the pilgrimage route is named Ishiyama Kannon. For it is the Kannon Bodhisattva that has the uncanny ability to change into many different forms, reincarnating itself in order to best serve all sentient beings who seek salvation from the cycle of birth, death and rebirth. According to the 25th chapter of the Lotus Sutra, the Kannon Bodhisattva can incarnate itself into thirty-three forms. While the Ishiyama pilgrimage route visits thirty-three stone statues of the Kannon, not all of these incarnations are represented. At Ishiyama Kannon Park, the *Roku Kannon*, or six forms of Kannon in varying styles are found along the pilgrimage route. There is the *Sho Kannon*, or the root, non-esoteric form of Kannon. The *Senju Kannon*, or the one thousand armed with one thousand eyes Kannon (around forty-two arms depicted). The *Juichimen Kannon*, or the eleven headed Kannon that includes a small image, or *kebutsu*, of the Amida Buddha amongst the other heads in its crown. The *Juntei Kannon*, or the pure Kannon. The *Bato Kannon*, or the horse-headed Kannon (which is seen with three angry heads). And the *Nyoirin Kannon*, having six arms two of which hold a wish granting jewel and a Dharma Wheel.

2-3. The Stone Buddhist Statues of Ishiyama 石山の磨崖仏

The stone Buddhist statues of Ishiyama, carved out of the natural stone of the mountain as well as from additional stones, are called “*Magai-butsu*”, literally meaning, “Buddhist statues carved into a rock”. The Ishiyama Kannon pilgrimage route as it winds its way through the natural surroundings of the woods and rock outcrops to each Buddhist statue is without peer in all of Japan. There are various pilgrimage sites in Japan containing many slightly different Buddha statues, often in a row, which have been created by the same sculptor in a relatively short amount of time. Here at Ishiyama Kannon, the Buddhist statues were crafted over time by an array of artists in a variety of sizes and configurations according chiefly to a standing “*ritsuzo*” or sitting “*zazo*” position. The arrangements of many

of the Buddhist statues in a half-relief shape combined with the extensive use of varying sculptural techniques adds to the outstanding peculiarity of Ishiyama Kannon Park and to the “*Magai-butsu*” themselves. Due to the fragile nature and to the constant weathering of the stone at Ishiyama, some statues were added towards the end of the Taisho era (1912-1926 A.D.) and the beginning of the Showa era (1926-1989 A.D.). In a few examples, these newer statues have been placed inside the original rock niches whereas upon closer inspection, the outlines of the previously eroded statue can be discovered.

In total, there are forty stone statues of Buddhist images throughout Ishiyama Kannon Park, including three that have been recognized by Mie prefecture as having important cultural heritage. The three include the 3.52 meter statue of the Amida Nyorai Buddha, the 3.24 meter statue of Jizo Bodhisattva, and the 2.52 meter statue of the Kannon Bodhisattva.

2-4. The Amida Nyorai Buddha Statue 阿弥陀如来立像

At the end of the journey along the pilgrimage path, the Amida Nyorai Buddha statue (*Nyorai* is an honorific term for the Buddha), standing approximately 3.52 meters in height (actually reaching 5 meters with foundation), and a designated important cultural property of Mie prefecture, awaits the traveler. The statue’s construction dates from the end of the Kamakura period (1185-1333 A.D.).

The entire figure of the Amida Nyorai Buddha stands perfectly straight, and the robe, or *e-mon*, he is wearing flows with ripples giving it a true sense of life and movement. One of the most surprising features of this great statue is the small hole that is carved in the middle of his chest, created to hold hand-copied Sutras. The Amida Nyorai Buddha’s hand gestures, or *mudra*, also give an indication (Upper Grade/Lower Birth) that he is welcoming devoted followers to the highest realm in the western paradise of the Pure Land of Bliss (Kapleau, 1967, pg. 347). While the index fingers and thumbs of both hands form a circle the other fingers remain straight. The right hand is raised with palm facing outward and near to the middle of the chest of the Amida Buddha while the left hand is lowered at his side with the palm of the hand facing outward. The stone-carved niche of the Amida Nyorai Buddha includes two large stone-carved steps, or *Kamichiza*, that act as an altar base where the statue stands atop the lotus pedestal.

It is also of particular interest to note the characters carved outside of the Amida Nyorai Buddha's foundation known as *Kurikata* in Japanese. These characters are important as art experts have noted that they appear among many wooden temples throughout Japan, thus giving us an invaluable clue for understanding the time period when these buildings were constructed.

Until around 1500 A.D. during the Sengoku period (1467-1603 A.D.) a Buddhist temple named "Jyo-Ren-Bou" had stood across the valley from Ishiyama Kannon Park. The Amida Nyorai Buddha statue was long a revered statue and visited by many worshippers. Today it remains one of the highlights and a culmination of one's visit to Ishiyama Kannon Park.

2-5. The History of Ishiyama Kannon 石山観音の歴史

The Amida Nyorai Buddha statue was carved during the Kamakura period (1185-1333 A.D.) and it is believed that at this time there was a Buddhist temple known as "Jyo-Ren-Bou" here at Ishiyama but this is not entirely clear. According to historical documentation, in a location across the valley opposing the Amida Nyorai Buddha statue and its home of Ishiyama or "Stone Mountain", there was a temple called "Jyo-Ren-Bou" that existed during the Sengoku period (1467-1603). It has been stated that this temple was in fact moved from here at Ishiyama to Kusuhara village in Miyazaki prefecture before the early Edo period of the Keian Year (1650 A.D.). The temple in Kusuhara village is known as the Old Ishiyama Kannon "Jou-Ren-Bou" Temple and it remains there today. Interestingly, it is said that the road leading up to the entrance to the Ishiyama Kannon Park area resembles the route from the settlements of Kusuhara village to "Jou-Ren-Bou" temple, including having to cross over a bridge that spans a small creek where a Jizo-Bodhisattva statue is located. Additionally, in the open area located at the entrance to Ishiyama Kannon Park, there was once a *san-ryu-do* (a bungalow, or one story building used for silent meditation and ascetic practice) that had existed until recent years.

2-6. Jizo Bodhisattva Statue 地蔵菩薩立像

Designated as an important cultural property of Mie prefecture, the impressive Jizo Bodhisattva at the entrance to Ishiyama Kannon Park stands 3.24 meters tall. The Jizo Bodhisattva is shown holding a staff with six rings in its right hand and a polished Dharma

jewel in its left hand. Noting the unique form of the staff, it can be surmised that the statue was created during the Muromachi era (1337-1573 A.D.). While the rock niche was deeply carved in order to best protect the statue, over time the elements have eliminated part of the staff from the lower half just under the stomach area of the Jizo Bodhisattva. The Jizo Bodhisattva figure has a halo, or *en-kou*, around its head and another halo, or *shin-kou*, around its waist helping to give the statue a Kokeshi-doll like shape. (A Kokeshi-doll is a traditional Japanese wooden doll having an elongated trunk with an enlarged head).

The Jizo Bodhisattva statue's face is filled with a gentle smile and furthermore if one takes a moment to look up to his face from the giant statue's feet, it appears even more enchanting.

2-7. The Statue of the Sacred Kannon Bodhisattva 聖観音菩薩立像

Just after the beginning of the pilgrimage route, the statue of the Sacred Kannon Bodhisattva, designated as an important cultural property of Mie prefecture, welcomes the traveler. The height of this large statue is 2.52 meters. Amongst all the stone Buddhist statues throughout Ishiyama Kannon Park this statue is the only one whose exact dates of creation are clearly known. The high priest Kaku-jun had an artist from Nara's Toshodai-ji temple carve this statue of the Kannon Bodhisattva in 1848, the first year of the Ka-ei time period (1848-1854 A.D.). The artist initiated work on the sculpture on January 25th 1848 A.D. and finished some three months later on May 27th 1848 A.D. Also, the original documents detailing this undertaking are still kept at the Toshodai-ji temple where on a scroll it is written that this statue "Sho-hon-boku-tan Sai-sho-Kannon-Ryuzo" is designated an important cultural property of Mie prefecture.

This statue is relatively new compared with many of the other statues in Ishiyama Kannon Park. Also due to the lesser quality of stone that it was sculpted from, the natural elements have over time left the statue, especially its facial features, heavily eroded.

2-8. Saigoku Sanjusan-kasho 西国三十三ヶ所

Saigoku Sanjusan-kasho is the collective name for the thirty-three temples dedicated to the Kannon bodhisattva, which are scattered around Gifu prefecture and the six prefectures in the Kansai region. Making a pilgrimage to each one of these temples has a long history in

Japan and has remained a popular way for people to express their particular devotion to Buddhist belief. The belief is that Kannon Bodhisattva which appears in “Myojo Renge-kyo Kanzeon Bosatsu fumon Hon No. 25” (the 25th chapter of the Lotus Sutra), transforms itself thirty-three times, that is why it is called Saigoku Sanjusan-kasho. It has long been believed by making a pilgrimage to each of these thirty-three sites that a person could wash away sins committed throughout one’s lifetime. At Ishiyama Kannon Park, the pilgrimage route follows in numerical order the thirty-three stone statues of Kannon.

2-9. The Thirty-Three Stone Statues of Kannon Bodhisattva: Cliff-Side Pilgrimage Route. 西国三十三ヶ所観音の磨崖仏

In the front of the entrance to Ishiyama Kannon Park there is the sitting “zazo” statue of Nyoirin Kannon also referred to as the Bodhisattva Hankazo. This statue was created in a very similar style to that of the Nyoirin Kannon statue of Seigando-ji Temple, the first temple of the Saigoku Thirty-Three Kannon Pilgrimage Route of the Nachi-san mountain range. Seated in a relaxed position atop the mountain paradise of Fudaraku, the Nyoirin Kannon has six arms, with each representing Kannon’s vow to assist all beings in the six realms of rebirth. In four of the statue’s hands are four separate objects including, a lotus bud, a Dharma wheel, prayer beads and a jewel. A fifth right hand rests against the Kannon’s face and a sixth left hand rests against the ground at the Kannon’s side (Kappleau, 1967, pgs. 166-167, 345).

The 1st, 2nd, 8th, and 33rd Buddhist statues in Ishiyama were made by sculptors employing a similar style as to that of the Nyoirin Kannon statue of Seigando-ji Temple. Many statues here at Ishiyama date several hundred years or more while at least thirteen were created in the years of the Taisho period (1912-1926) and the early years of the Showa period (1926-1989). Throughout Ishiyama Kannon Park, the forty Buddhist images, including several that are very small, with others being quite large, help to create an atmosphere unlike any other.

2-10. The Hashimoto Jizo Bodhisattva Statues 橋本の地藏菩薩

Opposite the main entrance to Ishiyama Kannon Park and just behind the small parking area there is a small path that leads down to the river. On one side of a stone outcrop that

can only be viewed by stepping directly into the riverbed are two Jizo Bodhisattva's carved into the rock face. One is a 1.3 meter tall "ritsuzo" or standing Jizo Bodhisattva stone statue, and the other is a 0.75 meter high "zazo" or sitting Jizo Bodhisattva stone statue. These statues have been carved into the stone including the niche, in which they are positioned, and hallowed out from the back. Directly across from the statues on the opposite side of the river are three Sanskrit characters carved into the stone face indicating that these are Jizo Bodhisattvas.

2-11. Other Buddhist Statues at Ishiyama Kannon Park その他の石仏

In addition to the main statues throughout the area, those of *Kobou-daishi* (the Grand Master who propagated the Buddhist teaching in Japan), *Acala* (a guardian deity), *En no Gyoja*, *O-Jizo-sama* (the guardian deity of children), *stone Buddhist images*, and *parts of a Gorinto image* (a five storied pagoda) are also being praised and worshiped here at Ishiyama Kannon Park.

2-12. Sacred Site of Prayer for Rain 雨乞いの霊場

At the entrance to Ishiyama Kannon Park, there is a stone lantern in front of the Jizo Bodhisattva statue. The inscription on the lantern states: *November 1739, Miten Calendar, Ryoshin, Kusuhara village, Hayashi village, Kusubirao village's "Ujiko"*. An *ujiko* is a term used to describe a person or persons who are under the protection of a community deity. The deity, or a guardian god-like figure, is known as *ujigami*. In the case of these three villages, Kusuhara, Hayashi, and Kusubirao, it is thought that the *ujigami* is a giver of rain, or a rain god. In addition to the stone lantern, a stone *chozubachi* or washbowl contains the inscription: *August, Mizunoe Dragon Year 1772, an auspicious day, Kusuhara village, Hayashi village, Kusubirao Village's "Ujiko"*. Undoubtedly, the village elders were offering prayers to their rain god, humbly begging for rain.

2-13. The Monument of Yashiro Mori 森弥四郎の碑

Along the forest path of the thirty-three Kannon Buddhist stone statues of Ishiyama Kannon Park, the monument of Yashiro Mori can be found just in front of the number eight Kannon Buddhist statue. Yashiro Mori was a member of Kusuhara village and a person who became a senior master (*leader of the Way*) having undergone extensive religious training at

Mt. Omine. Originally known as Mt. Sanju, Mt. Omine is a sacred mountain temple complex in the mountains of Nara prefecture, known for its intensive religious training based on the teachings of its founder, the mystic *En no Gyoja* in the eighth century A. D. The descendants of Yashiro Mori have contributed to the restoration of the Buddha statues that were rebuilt during the Taisho (1912-1926) and early Showa (1926-1989) periods.

3. Closing Remarks

A significant portion of this paper marks for the first time in publication an English language interpretation of the original Japanese language information provided about the sacred pilgrimage route and its stone Buddhist statues known as Ishiyama Kannon Park. It would not have been possible without the efforts from all the students who participated in this course project. I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to the town of Geino and to the city of Tsu for helping to protect and preserve this most sacred and sensitive environment, Ishiyama Kannon.

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