

## Kii Mountain Range (Japan)

No 1142

### 1. BASIC DATA

*State Party:* Japan

*Name of property:* Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range, and the Cultural Landscapes that surround them

*Location:* Mie, Nara and Wakayama Prefectures

*Date received:* 27 January 2003

*Category of property:*

In terms of the categories of cultural property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a *site*. In terms of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*, paragraph 39, this is a *cultural landscape*

*Brief description:*

Set in dense forests in the Kii Mountains overlooking the Pacific Ocean, three sacred sites, Yoshino and Omine, Kumano Sanzan, and Koyasan, linked by pilgrimage routes to the ancient capital cities of Nara and Kyoto, reflect a unique fusion between Shinto, rooted in the ancient tradition of nature worship in Japan, and Buddhism introduced to Japan from China and the Korean peninsula. Together, the sites and the forest landscape that surrounds them reflect a persistent and extraordinarily well-documented tradition of sacred mountains over the past 1200 years.

### 2. THE PROPERTY

#### *Description*

The nominated site consists of three sacred sites in the heavily forested Kii Mountains, a peninsula jutting into the Pacific Ocean, and a complex pattern of tracks and paths which link the sites together and to the ancient capitals of Nara and Kyoto to the north, which flourished from the 6<sup>th</sup> century to 1868.

The steep and rugged mountains of the Kii peninsula rise to between 1,000 and 2,000 metres and are heavily wooded. The area is wet; the high rainfall of over 3,000 mm feeds an abundance of streams, rivers and waterfalls between the mountains.

The natural beauty of the area, and its harsh but serene mountain environment, has probably been revered since pre-historic times. The three specific sites had become established as major sacred sites as early as the 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, attracting a great number of worshippers. The area is still part of the living culture of Japan and the sites are heavily visited and used for ritual purposes, and for hiking, with up to an estimated 15 million people visiting annually.

In all, the nominated site covers 495.3 ha. This is made up of the three main sites, which cover 44.8, 94.2, and 63.1 ha respectively, and 307.6 km of pilgrimage routes, which together cover 293.2 ha. The pilgrim routes nominated are not all contiguous as there are sections excluded where they have been influenced by modern development. All parts of the nominated site are protected by a buffer zone, which varies in extent from element to element – some of the routes only being protected by a very narrow zone. The whole buffer zone covers 11,370ha.

The nominated site consists of the following cultural qualities:

- *The forested mountains*
- *Three main shrines:*
  - *Yoshino and Omine*
  - *Kumano Sanzan*
  - *Koyasan*
- *Pilgrim routes*
- *Association with Shinto and Buddhism*
- *Diaspora effect – the sites as models for other shrines, temples and sacred sites*
- *Inspiration for poets and painters*
- *Documented use of the mountains*

These are dealt with in turn:

#### *The forested mountains*

The forested mountains underpin the significances of the whole site, for it is the beauty and drama of the mountains and their contrast with the seascape to the south, which has attracted people for at least 2000 years.

The nomination does not describe in detail the mountains or their forest cover or the differing patterns and profiles of the woods in various parts of the site. It gives details of the following specific sites:

- Vast stretches of cheery trees, planted and revered since the 10<sup>th</sup> century in Yoshinoyama, and around Kimpusen-ji Hondo where they form part of an annual ritual in April when cherry blossoms are offered to the deity
- An ancient *Podocarpus nagi* at Kumano Hayatmam Taisha, planted according to legend in 1159
- The Nchi primeval forest part of the Kumnao complex; protected since ancient times as sanctuary
- Giant trees up to 500 years old surrounding the cemetery in Koyasan site
- Natural forest of silver fir trees alongside one of the pilgrim routes Omine Okugakemichi, and which have been traditionally protected since the 15<sup>th</sup> century
- Large clumps of *Magnolia Sieboldi* of which 108 ha are protected near the silver fir trees

- A group of ancient cedar trees said to be 3,000 years old, in the compound for the shrine immediately below the top of Mt Tamakisan
- Japanese black pine trees planted in the 17<sup>th</sup> century as a wind break along the coastal pilgrims' route

In the immediate aftermath of the Second World War there was a huge surge in demand for timber, which led to loss of trees over the mountains generally. This in turn prompted the protection of areas immediately surrounding the three main sites and the main pilgrimage routes.

*Three main shrines:*

Each of the three shrines contains both buildings and objects, such as temples, shrines, statues and stupas, as well as revered natural elements such as trees, waterfalls, rocks etc. Within the three main sites are 17 major groups of properties comprising 35 individual properties.

The built structures are nearly all of wood, constructed in a post and pillar construction similar to Japanese houses. Many have been successively re-built – see the conservation section below. There is no overall assessment of the key architectural characteristics in the dossier, although the uniqueness of certain structures is stressed.

➤ *Yoshino and Omine*

This is the northernmost site near to Nara.

The Yoshino or northern part of the site was by the mid 10<sup>th</sup> century known as the most important sacred mountain in Japan and its reputation had reached China. It was the object of mountain worship, Shinto, in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries and later in the 8<sup>th</sup> century became one of the prime sacred places for the Shugen sect of ascetic Buddhism. Omine, the southern part, was also associated with the Shugen sect and, in particular, with ascetic practices connected to the harsh mountain environment.

This site consists of groups of buildings in what is said to be a unique architectural style constructed, as an embodiment of Shinto-Buddhist religious fusion.

Particular monuments include:

- Yoshinoyama ridge with shrines, temples, and hospices for pilgrims surrounded by large numbers of cherry trees
- Yoshino Mikumari-jinja shrine – a Shinto shrine documented as early as 698.
- Kimpu-jinja originally a Shinto shrine associated with gold mining and later a Shugen shrine with four gates; it is first documented in 852.
- The Kimpusen-ji temple - the large main building was reconstructed in 1592. The front gate was reconstructed in 1456; it stands 20m high and is a fine example of two-stored 'medieval' gatehouse.
- Omimesan-ji temple on the mountaintop at around 1710m, first documented in 906

*Kumano Sanzan*

This site is the furthest south. It stretches from the coast inland some 60km. The shrine buildings are said to show

outstanding wooden architectural styles that have no comparators. Within the site are three main shrines, and two temples, connected by a pilgrims' route. They reflect Shinto and the Shugen sect of Shinto-Buddhism, and were also closely associated with the search for the pure Buddhist land in the southern sea – see below:

➤ *Kumano Honu Taisha*

Originally on sandbanks at the edge of the Kumano River, this shrine was first documented in 859. It was moved to higher level in 1891 after damage from flooding. It still reflects its traditional form as documented in a pilgrim's diary in the 11<sup>th</sup> century and drawn in 1299.

➤ *Kumano Hayatama Taisha*

Thus shrine was reconstructed in 1951. The shrine complex includes the Gongenyama mountain with its many cliffs known as 'god's shield', a gigantic rock Gotobikiwa, revered as a sacred object, the site of a fire festival, Kumano Otomatsuri, and the ancient *Podocarpus nagi* tree which legend says was planted in 1159.

➤ *Kumano Nachi Taisha*

This shrine is sited near a large waterfall, *Nachi no Otaki*, originally the object of worship, and is associated with a fire festival, *Machi no Himasuri*, linked to the waterfall. The shrine was reconstructed in 1853. Nearby to the east is the Nachi Primeval Forest extending to around 32ha, which has been sacred since ancient times.

➤ *Seiganto-ji*

Legend suggests this temple was founded in the early 5<sup>th</sup> century. The present large building was constructed in 1590 and reconstructed in 1924. It is part of a pilgrimage to 33 sacred *Kannons* started in 1161. Nearby is a large stone stupa constructed in 1322 by a Buddhist nun.

➤ *Fudarakusan-ji*

The temple, near the sea-coast, is associated with the search for the pure Buddhist land in the Southern Sea, which led to the martyrdom of around 20 Buddhist priests who set sail in small boats between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

*Koyasan*

This site south of Nara is partly in an 'Alpine' basin at an altitude of 800m and partly at the foot of the mountains. It is actively used for annual festivals and rituals dedicated to the deity of the land and the rites of the Buddhist *Shingon* sect. The site includes the following:

➤ *Niutsuhime-jinja*

This shrine is first documented in 855 but is said to have a much earlier origin. It formerly contained many Buddhist structures such as halls, stupas and hospices, but these were moved after the 19<sup>th</sup> Buddhist Separation Decree - see below. Of the remaining halls, two were constructed in 1469, and two reconstructed in 1715 and 1901, but each contain small shrines, *Kuden*, of original construction dating to 1306. Alongside is a building dating from 1499.

➤ Kongobu-ji

Since its foundation in 816, the shrine has been associated with the *Shingon* sect of Buddhism. The shrine is divided into six areas and includes 117 temples, densely sited on the mountaintop between 'sublime' ridges and 'profound' forests. The temple buildings, and particularly the *Garan* complex in a unique style, had a profound influence on other *Shingon* temples.

The main buildings include halls, which are a 1523 reconstruction and a 14<sup>th</sup> century reconstruction of a building built in 1198, a pagoda dating from 1223, and a log construction sutra storehouse also constructed in 1223.

An area known as *Okuno-in* some 3km to the east houses an extensive collection of some 300,000 stone stupas, mausolea for feudal lords, and a few wooden buildings, the whole sheltered by 500-year-old trees.

➤ Jison-in

This complex some 20km to the north of the main shrines was constructed in the 9<sup>th</sup> century as administrative offices and accommodation for pilgrims. It was repeatedly reconstructed – the existing main hall is a 14<sup>th</sup> century reconstruction, enlarged in 1540.

➤ Niukanshofu-jinja

The three shrine buildings on a plateau to the south of Jison-in were reconstructed in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

### *Pilgrim routes*

As the sacred sites became established and well visited in the 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, a series of pilgrim routes were developed linking the sites to Kyoto and to other places throughout Japan – some based on earlier tracks. The routes in the mountains were designed to be arduous and the journey over them part of the religious experience, rather than a means to an end. Most of the routes are no more than a metre wide and of earth; in a few places stone steps or stone pavements were constructed, such as the 34km stretch of stone paving through the forest, part of the Kumano Sankeimichi route between Kumano Sanzen and Ise Jungu (see below).

There are three main pilgrim routes:

- Omine Okugakemichi, linked the northern and southern sites of Yoshino and Omine, and Kumano Sanzan. This route was used as a stage in ascetic practices by Buddhist priests. It passes along high mountain ridges between 1000 and 2000 metres above sea level. Legend suggests that it was first constructed in the early 8<sup>th</sup> century. In the 12<sup>th</sup> century there were 120 delineated significant places along the route such as caves or villages; by the 17<sup>th</sup> century these had been reduced to 75. The route passes through a forest of silver fir trees, groves of Magnolia and a group of ancient cedar trees.
- Kumano Sankeimichi, linked the southernmost site, Kumano Sanzen, with Kyoto and other parts

of Japan. It basically consists of three sub-routes: along the coast of the peninsula; across the peninsula, and north to Koyasan. These routes started in the 10<sup>th</sup> century and were used by large numbers of people until the 15<sup>th</sup>. At the height of its use, it is said that as many as 30,000 people passed along each year. Along the route are the Yunomine hot spring, revered for its healing properties, and a huge rock some 45m high, Hana no Iwaya, which according to legend marks the grave of the deity who created Japan.

- Koyasan Choishmichi is a short route of 24km created by the founder of the temple at Kongobu-ji, Kukai, to connect the temple with Jison-ji, the administrative buildings, (both part of the Koyasan site). Every 109 m (known as *Cho*) along the route are stone signposts called *Choishi*, five tiered stupas, erected in 1285 with donations by the Imperial family to replace wooden posts. Out of 220 *Choishi*, 179 are original.

### *Association with Shinto and Buddhism*

The Shinto religion which nurtures the spirit of nature worship has been practised in Japan since ancient times. In the 6<sup>th</sup> century Buddhism was introduced into Japan, and adopted as a religion for peace and national stability in the second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. It did not supplant Shintoism. Instead, over the centuries a unique form of Shinto-Buddhism evolved, based on the belief that Japanese traditional gods are the incarnations of Buddhist deities. The Kii Mountains became the centre for this religious movement in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Two Buddhist sects were also closely associated with the Kii Mountains. The *Shingon* sect of esoteric Buddhism was introduced in the 9<sup>th</sup> century from China, and from the mid 10<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> century the *Shugen* sect was established which combined elements of pre-Buddhist mountain worship, esoteric Buddhism called *Mikkyo* and Taoist beliefs introduced from China. The goal of this sect was to attain supernatural abilities through ascetic practices in the mountains.

In the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries, as an extension of Buddhist thought, the Kii Mountains became associated with the 'Pure Land' where Buddhist deities were thought to reside and where dead people could be re-born. In time the Southern Sea was absorbed into this belief as the paradise called *Fudaraku Jodo*.

### *Diaspora effect – the sites as models for other shrines, temples and sacred sites*

The shrine buildings of Kumano Sanzan developed a unique architectural style and came to serve as models for more than 3,000 shrines dedicated to the Kumano deity built throughout Japan. The dossier does not explain the characteristics of this unique style.

Similarly the *Garan* complex of buildings, part of the Kongobu-ji mountain shrine in Koyasan, came to act as architectural models for the *Shingon* sect temples throughout Japan which number around 4,000. Again the characteristics of these temples are not described.

The mountain landscapes shrouded by deep evergreen forests which pilgrims encountered on the pilgrims routes,

and in particular the natural sacred sites, also came to influence the formation of local sacred sites in various parts of Japan.

#### *Inspiration for poets and painters*

Although only mentioned briefly in the dossier, it is clear that the Kii Mountain sacred landscape provided inspiration for many artists and poets. The groves of cherry trees, for instance, surrounding temples in Yoshinoyama, part of the Yoshino and Omine site, were written into Waku poems and drawn by many artists. Elsewhere it is mentioned that the Kumano Hongu Taisha Shaden shrine, part of Kumano Sanzen, was drawn as early as 1299. And as tourists began to visit the shrines in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century publications of drawings and description of sites were made available – as was happening in Europe at the same time.

More discussion on the influence of writings and paintings would have been valuable.

#### *Documented use of the mountains*

One exceptional aspect of the group of shrines and routes is their very full documentation stretching back to the 8<sup>th</sup> century and detailing precise dates for construction and reconstruction of buildings, those who commissioned work, the planting of trees, and impressions of pilgrims and travellers. The nature and extent of the written archives is not detailed in the dossier, although the *Kojiki*, the Japan Record of Ancient Matters, and the *Nihon Shoki*, the Chronicle of Japan, compiled in the 8<sup>th</sup> century are two key sources.

#### **History**

From the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, when rice culture was introduced into Japan and settlements began to develop in the lowlands, the Shinto religion, in which natural features such as mountains, forests, rocks and trees were revered as gods, came to be embraced – perhaps as a link to ancient dwelling sites in the hills. The mountain gods were thought to control water, essential for rice growing in the plains, and gold ore, needed as towns developed. It was also believed that the god who guided the first Emperor to build Nara the first capital resided in the mountains. Thus the Shinto religion came to be influential not only in rural areas but also in the towns as they were formed.

The introduction of Buddhism in the mid 6<sup>th</sup> century coincided with the development by the government of a centralised system of laws, following examples in China and the Korean peninsula. The government adopted Buddhism as the guardian religion for the nation and in the mid 8<sup>th</sup> century temples were built in each province of Japan. At the same time the concept of the Pure Land associated with the Kii Mountains began to gain ground and people started to undertake training in the mountains.

In the 8<sup>th</sup> century the capital was moved to Kyoto and in the following century the esoteric Buddhist sect *Mikkyo* was brought to Japan from China. This stressed the belief that mountains are places for training to attain awakening. Out of this developed the local *Shingon* sect and many new temples were constructed in the Kii Mountains. The rise of Mikkyo/Shingon coincided with the rise in power of aristocrats whose authority was based on land ownership.

They embraced this new sect, as did the Emperor who hosted various religious rites in what were coming to be seen as the sacred Kii Mountains. The new sect also interacted with Shintoism, a fusion that had been in existence since the 8<sup>th</sup> century and from this interaction the uniquely Japanese Shinto-Buddhist religion emerged which was to be a powerful force until the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The growth of pilgrims visiting sites in the Kii Mountains seems to have coincided with the rise of social unrest around the capital in the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> centuries. It was at this time that many of the pilgrim routes were laid out.

In the following two centuries, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>, the distinctly Japanese flowering of Buddhist practices, and the buildings that were associated with these beliefs, were strengthened by the government's decision to stop sending delegations to China. The consecration of the three main sites in the Kii Mountains were all progressed, and gained considerable support from people who were wanting escape from the worsening social conditions characterised by conflict between samurai. The Imperial family, aristocrats and samurai all became benefactors of new temples and land to support them, as a means of guaranteeing a better life in the hereafter and a retired Emperor made a first pilgrimage to Koyasan and Kumano Sanzan in the late 11<sup>th</sup> century – stimulating others to follow in ever larger numbers. This prompted the development of hospices, the improvement of shrines and temples, the construction of *Oji* shrines along the main routes, and the funding by the Imperial family and aristocrats of people to manage the sites.

The Kii Mountain sites were thus established by the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century as the main sacred mountain site in Japan, and attained a status which would persist to the present day.

At the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century the government was moved to Kamkura –although the ruling family remained in Kyoto. From the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> century conflict between Imperial factions, the grip on power by the samurai and battles between feudal lords meant a weakening of Imperial and centralised authority, but at the same time the growth of a monetary economy and improved methods of production led to a new rich class. Pilgrimages were now extended to anyone who could afford the journey.

From the 17<sup>th</sup> until 1868 a powerful feudal government was established in Edo (later Tokyo) and much of the land associated with temples was absorbed by the government. Support however for the temples continued from the government and ordinary people. At the same time improved roads made travel easier and the number of pilgrims began to increase, as did those wanting to travel as tourists.

In 1868 the Emperor took control from the feudal government and the Imperial capital was moved to Tokyo. The new government introduced measures to control religions in Japan, and issued the Shintoism and Buddhism Separation Decree in 1868. This prohibited activities related to the Shinto-Buddhist fusion and statues of Buddha were removed from shrines. However because of the strong support by society at large for the Kii Mountains and their shrines, many survived. Such was the outflow of cultural properties from Japan as a result of the law that in 1897 the government brought in the Ancient Shrines and

Temples Preservation Law, strengthening it in 1929, and extending it in 1919 to include natural sites.

After World War II, with the revitalising of the economy, visitors once again returned to the Kii Mountains and still visit in large numbers.

### **Management regime**

#### *Legal provision:*

The Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties, 1950, is the main legal framework. All the key cultural sites are designated as national treasures or important cultural properties, historic sites, places of scenic beauty or natural monuments. These are listed in the dossier and total 41 in all.

Any alteration to, or activities with adverse effects on the existing condition of, cultural properties designated under the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties, is only permitted with prior permission from the Commissioner of the Agency for Cultural Affairs. In addition, small-scale repair or restoration for maintenance purpose also requires prior submission of notification. However, minor alterations without prior permission or notice are found in some properties. Natural sites in the nominated property and its buffer zones are located within the boundary of the Special Zone or the Special Protection Zone of the Yoshino-Kumano National Park, which is designated by the Natural Park Law.

#### *Management structure:*

The Agency for Cultural Affairs in the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology is in charge of cultural properties including World Heritage sites.

The owners or custodial bodies manage, repair and open them to the public. The national government, where necessary, subsidises the cost of repair and management of the designated sites and provides technical guidance. Shinto shrines and Buddhist Temples are owned by religious organisations or by individuals. Pilgrimage routes are owned by individuals or by national or local governments. Places of Scenic Beauty and Natural Monuments are owned by private owners or corporations or by national or local governments.

A Management Plan has been produced by the Boards of Education of Mie, Nara and Wakayama Prefectures, in collaboration with the Agency for Cultural Affairs, and this was submitted with the nomination. This sets out:

- Basic Principles, Identification of the Components of the Property, (to be undertaken);
- Methodology for Appropriate Preservation and Management – (this is general and does not indicate who will be advising or where specialist advice will be obtained);

- Preservation of the Surrounding Environment (this covers the need for ordinances to protect those areas currently unprotected);
- Conservation and Utilisation Plans (a list of subjects to be covered by such plans is given including the need to promote knowledge of the site and provide adequate facilities for visitors);
- Organisation and Institutionalisation for the Implementation of Preservation and Management of the Property (this sets out the need to reinforce existing staff and appoint full-time officers as custodians, improve coordination between Prefectures and the national agency, and provide training).

It is also stated in the dossier that each of the educational boards has prepared its own individual preservation and management plan for 'practical preservation and management'. These were not submitted nor were they available for inspection during the mission. *The Three-Prefectures Council to Promote World Heritage Registration*, which was established to pursue the nomination, is maintaining liaison and coordination among related organisations and operating effectively and cooperatively.

#### *Resources:*

No extra resources have yet been put in place for the management of the site if inscribed, but as stated above the Prefectures are committed to providing adequate trained staff.

### **Justification by the State Party (summary)**

The site is put forward for its outstanding universal value related to the way the Kii Mountain Range:

- Has nurtured the spirit of nature worship since ancient times
- Is the central place for Buddhist ascetic practices
- Developed a unique Shinto-Buddhist syncretism
- Is associated with the Buddhist idea of the Pure Land
- Developed three main shrine sites which became the key mountain sites in Japan
- Influenced the development of shrine and temple building throughout Japan
- Houses important and extensive pilgrim routes which are part of religious practices

## **3. ICOMOS EVALUATION**

### **Actions by ICOMOS**

An ICOMOS evaluation mission visited the site in October 2003.

ICOMOS has also consulted its International Scientific Committee on Historic Gardens / Cultural Landscapes.

## **Conservation**

### *State of conservation:*

Many of the key sites have been protected since 1897 under the Ancient Shrines and Temples Preservation Law upon which later laws were based. Details of the state of conservation of the main cultural sites are given in the dossier and generally the individual components are in a very good state of repair.

Most of the monuments are wooden structures and are susceptible to the wet climate. Many of the structures have been dismantled and reconstructed several times and others have been completely renewed. Although complete renewal would not now be carried out, complete dismantling and partial dismantling are still carried out as a continuation of a long tradition of repair.

The number and complexity of the main shrines, and the need for regular maintenance and repair, led to the formation of groups of skilled craftsmen attached to the shrines before 1868. Now the Nara and Wakayama prefectures have officers who give advice on repairs. Many of the pilgrimage routes are maintained by a non-profit organisations, as are the forests of cherry trees.

### *Management:*

The management regimes listed above appear to work satisfactorily. Although it is stated in the management plan that there is a need to improve coordination between prefectures and the national agency, in view of the vast scale of the nominated site and its complexity, covering both cultural and natural assets, it is suggested that a more sophisticated management system is required to address these challenges, perhaps involving a coordinator or coordinating committee. Moreover given the size of the challenge, ways of involving local communities in sustainable management practices would seem to be desirable. The dossier does not mention any programmes to gain the support of or involve local communities in the overall management of the site. However during the evaluation mission mention was made of efforts to involve NGOs and various civic groups and thus mobilised support from older people in Japan who are increasing in number.

### *Risk analysis:*

The nomination lists the following threats:

*Development pressures:* Although the nominated property is amidst the largest concentration of urban settlement in the whole archipelago, development is said to be sufficiently controlled by existing laws.

*Environmental pressures:* No detrimental environmental changes are envisaged. However there is no mention in the dossier of damage to forests by water or fire, nor environmentally sound waste disposal for visitors.

*Natural disasters and preparedness:* Satisfactory mitigation measures for typhoons, heavy rain or landslide have been put in place. Fire detection systems are in place in all the major monuments as are lightning conductors.

*Visitor/Tourism pressure:* There appear to be no measures to control the numbers of visitors. Arrangements for ensuring that facilities are adequate and appropriate are in place.

Other threats are:

*Car parking:* In some sites parking conflicts with pedestrians such as near the Kimpusen-ji temple and in villages near Koyasan.. A visitor management strategy needs to be developed to consider these issues.

*Overhead wires:* Electricity and telephone wires are mostly overground and exert a negative influence on some monuments. Consideration should be given to undergrounding these wires.

*Inappropriate visitor facilities:* These were noted at several sites. The management plan needs to consider this issue and determines how support can be given to make arrangements for visitors more appropriate.

## **Authenticity and integrity**

### *Authenticity:*

The main issues relating to authenticity is the reconstruction of monuments. However as stated above, there is a long tradition of reconstructing and renewing the wooden fabric of buildings: the idea, design and location of the building are considered crucial, whereas the individual components may or may not be original. Hence what is being put forward are buildings that in most case are not the original structures but nevertheless are considered worthy of veneration for their association with the ideals and ideas of their founders.

Two secondary issues are visitor facilities and overhead wires. Inappropriate facilities can be detrimental to the overall authenticity of the site as can overhead wires. In both instances arrangements need to be put in place to reverse development which impinges on authenticity.

### *Integrity:*

There is one issue connected to integrity: the discontinuity of the nominated pilgrim routes. What has been nominated is only those parts of the pilgrim routes which are still relatively intact in terms of the condition of the track and its setting. Where development has intervened negatively the track has been excluded. This means that the pilgrim routes are in some place a series of short stretches. If the discontinuity is to be understood by visitors, then measures need to be put in place to allow an understanding of the links between disconnected pieces of the routes.

## **Comparative evaluation**

The dossier states that the nominated property is unique and therefore it is impossible to make direct comparisons with similar properties elsewhere.

Certainly the association of the Kii Mountains with Shinto-Buddhism is a unique phenomenon as is the precise way that social and economic forces have influenced the development of the shrines. However the idea of mountains attaining sacred qualities revered by a nation, and persisting over a long time span is not unique. Similar perception of mountains exist in China where mountains are thought to guard the edges of the Empire and where miniature mountains decorate gardens and offer individual protection. There the way mountains are perceived, painted and climbed is subject to well-defined principles

which have persisted for generations. One could argue that the spiritual association between man and mountains is as strong in China as in Japan. However what is different is the way that in Japan the Kii Mountains became accessible not just to Emperors, priests, aristocrats and samurai but to ordinary peoples – who could work to attain enhancement through walking the pilgrims' routes.

### ***Outstanding universal value***

#### *General statement:*

The Sacred sites and pilgrim routes of the Kii Mountains are of outstanding universal value for the combination of the following cultural qualities:

The Kii Mountains:

- Have come to be seen as the national repository of Shinto beliefs – linking the present day population of Japan with prehistoric times
- Have absorbed and developed the Buddhist beliefs to create a unique Shinto-Buddhist religion which fostered ascetic practices closely related to the topography and climate of the mountains
- Become the setting for the creation of unique forms of shrine and temple buildings which have had a profound influence on the building of temples and shrines elsewhere in Japan
- Developed an extensive network of pilgrim routes which are part of the ritual of worship
- Have fostered the conservation of ancient trees, forests, glades natural features, revered for their religious associations
- Are strongly associated with long-lasting intangible cultural traditions related to natural forces
- Are extraordinarily well documented in terms of the way they have been perceived and used over the past 1200 years.

#### *Evaluation of criteria:*

The property is nominated on the basis of *criteria ii, iii, iv and vi*.

*Criterion ii:* The monuments and sites that form the cultural landscape are a unique fusion between Shinto and Buddhism that illustrates the interchange and development of religious cultures in East Asia.

*Criterion iii:* The sites of the Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples, the way they have evolved and their associated rituals, bear exceptional testimony to the development of Japan's religious culture over more than a thousand years.

*Criterion iv:* The wooden shrine buildings in the nominated site are representative of the highest forms of their genre; they also served as models for shrines constructed throughout Japan in dedication to the Kumano deity. In addition the numerous stone stupas in Koyasan Okuno-in illustrate the development of styles for stone mausolea throughout Japan.

*Criterion vi:* The highly sacred natural objects and places, the surrounding forest landscapes and the continuity of rituals and festivals associated with the property all combine to reflect a long continuity of living cultural traditions associated with sacred mountains.

## **4. ICOMOS RECOMMENDATIONS**

### ***Recommendation for the future***

The whole nomination is underpinned by the wooded mountain landscape. This is not described or analysed in the dossier nor is its management dealt with in any detail. It is essential that the nominated areas are sustainable from a forestry management points of view – particularly the narrow corridors surrounding the pilgrims' routes, as the 'natural' elements of the site are strongly associated with the cultural values of spirituality

It is recommended that the site be put forward for inscription and that the State Party be asked to consider the following issues:

#### *Inventories:*

Under records in the dossier only publications are listed. No mention is made of inventory surveys of the site or of individual monuments. It is recommended that an inventory of the key elements of the site is carried out over the next five years in order to inform management. This should include an analysis of the wooded mountain landscape.

#### *Management:*

The site is extremely large and complex and the proposed informal consultation between Prefectures would seem to be less than adequate for the management challenges. It is recommended that the State Party give consideration to setting up a coordinating body to oversee the management of the site and perhaps appoint an overall coordinator.

Furthermore it is suggested that a more detailed management plan is produced for the World Heritage Centre within two years, which will address sustainable management of the natural as well as the cultural aspects of the site.

#### *Authenticity and Integrity:*

It is recommended that the State Party put in place procedures to allow the issues of overhead wires and visitor facilities to be considered and a medium term strategy put in place.

#### *Title of nomination:*

It is suggested that the title of the nomination could be amended. In the Japanese, the last phrase 'and the cultural landscapes that surround them' is omitted. As the shrines and pilgrim routes are part of the cultural landscape the phrase could be said to be unnecessary in English or in French.

***Recommendation with respect to inscription***

That, subject to the recommendations above, the property be inscribed on the World Heritage List as a *cultural landscape* on the basis of ***criteria ii, iii, iv and vi***:

***Criterion ii:*** The monuments and sites that form the cultural landscape of the Kii Mountains are a unique fusion between Shintoism and Buddhism that illustrates the interchange and development of religious cultures in East Asia.

***Criterion iii:*** The Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples in the Kii Mountains, and their associated rituals, bear exceptional testimony to the development of Japan's religious culture over more than a thousand years.

***Criterion iv:*** The Kii Mountains have become the setting for the creation of unique forms of shrine and temple buildings which have had a profound influence on the building of temples and shrines elsewhere in Japan

***Criterion vi:*** Together, the sites and the forest landscape of the Kii Mountains reflect a persistent and extraordinarily well-documented tradition of sacred mountains over the past 1200 years.

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