Shingon Buddhism Workshop

Tours to the 88-temple Shikoku pilgrimage and the sacred mountain of Koyasan (Mt. Koya) in Wakayama have received international attention as Japan’s inbound tourism to those two sites has increased year on year in the lead up to the 2020 Olympics. Yet, the Buddhist monk behind the existence of the pilgrimage and the founding of the temple complex at Mt. Koya — Kōbō Daishi Kūkai — and the impact that he and the Shingon Buddhist movement had on Japan is less well known. At this workshop, three leading scholars of Shingon Buddhism will discuss the hagiographies of Kūkai, the social impact of his school of Buddhism on medieval Japan, and how this school’s new esoteric practices intersected with other Buddhist movements.

10 am   Welcome Remarks by Duncan Williams (Ito Center)

10:15 am "The Eventful Afterlife of Kōbō Daishi Kūkai: The Role of Kūkai Hagiography in the Foundation of the Shingon School"
Matt McMullen, Nanzan University

11:45 am  Break

12:45 pm  "Esoteric Buddhist Responses to Social Disorder in Heian Japan"
Eric Swanson, Harvard University

2:15 pm   Coffee Break

2:30  "Medieval Koyasan and Esoteric Pure Land Buddhism in Practice"
Aaron Proffitt, SUNY, Albany

RSVP at dornsife.usc.edu/cjrc | Refreshments will be served