

Rokugo Manzan

The term “*Rokugo Manzan*” is important for understanding the history and culture of the Kunisaki Peninsula. The characters can be read as “six mountainous regions,” but the term actually refers to the many places of worship that are found throughout the peninsula. These can range from a particular rock on the side of a mountain to centers of Buddhist learning.

Sometime during the eighth and ninth centuries, Esoteric Buddhism came to coexist with native Shinto beliefs, probably first at a shrine in the neighboring city of Usa. Over the years, an eclectic mix of doctrines and precepts evolved: Buddhist temples came to share space with Shinto shrines, and Buddhist terms were even absorbed into the Shinto lexicon—and vice versa.

Kunisaki was once home to over sixty-five temples scattered around the peninsula, with their focus divided between study, ascetic training, and proselytizing. Today, thirty-one temples of the Tendai sect of Esoteric Buddhism remain, as does the aura of spirituality that recalls the long history of *Rokugo Manzan* culture.