

**Zeitschrift:** IABSE congress report = Rapport du congrès AIPC = IVBH  
Kongressbericht

**Band:** 13 (1988)

**Artikel:** Steel cover structures for the renovation of large temples

**Autor:** Arakawa, Harunori / Osaki, Yorihiro

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-13046>

### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

**Download PDF:** 09.08.2025

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**

## Steel Cover Structures for the Renovation of Large Temples

Structures métalliques pour la restauration de grands édifices en bois

Stahlrüstung für die Renovierung eines großen Holzbaues

**Harunori ARAKAWA**  
Chief, Build. Eng. Dep.  
Shimizu Construction Co.  
Osaka, Japan



Born in 1934; graduated from school of Architecture, Nagoya Institute of Technology; joined Shimizu Construction in 1957; 1st class Licensed Architect and Licensed Technical Consultant.

**Yorihiko OSAKI**  
Exec. Vice Pres.  
Shimizu Construction Co., Ltd.  
Tokyo, Japan



Born in 1921; graduated from Aeronautical Science school, Engineering Department, Tokyo Imperial University; after teaching at Tokyo University as a Professor, joined Shimizu Construction in 1982 as an Executive Vice President and also assumed the post of the President of Osaki General Research Institute;

### SUMMARY

There are very many large Shinto and Buddhism temples built of timber in Japan. Reconstruction or repair of such buildings, when required, is made by placing a large cover structure which covers them up entirely. In conventional practice, it used to be fabricated by the use of wooden logs and manpower. In the recent large scale repair of the Todaiji Temple in Nara, a rationally designed steel structure was used utilizing steel scaffold materials also used for repair of the Zaodo Temple on Mt. Kinbusan.

### RÉSUMÉ

Il existe au Japon de nombreux temples shintoïstes et bouddhistes construits en bois. La reconstruction partielle ou la réparation de ces bâtiments, lorsqu'elle s'avère nécessaire, est réalisée après que les temples ont été entièrement recouverts d'une structure provisoire. Au cours des réparations importantes qui ont été effectuées sur le temple de Todaiji à Nara, une telle structure métallique a été conçue tandis qu'une application faisant appel à un échafaudage en acier a été réalisée pour la réparation du temple Zaodo sur le Mont Kinbusan.

### ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

In Japan gibt es eine große Anzahl aus Holz gebauter shintoistischer und buddhistischer Tempel. Die Rekonstruktion oder Reparatur solcher Gebäude erfolgt nach der Errichtung einer Hüllstruktur, die den Tempel vollständig einschließt. Bei konventionellen Verfahren wurde die Hüllstruktur aus Holz von Hand errichtet. Bei der letzten Großreparatur des Todaiji Tempels in Nara gelangte eine rationell konstruierte Stahlstruktur zum Einsatz. Auch für die Reparatur des Zaodo Tempels auf dem Berg Mt. Kinbusan wurde eine ähnliche Struktur mit Stahlgerüst verwendet.



## 1. PREFACE

Traditionally in Japan, the very large temporary protective shelter known as SUYANE has been used for new construction, restoration or extensive renovation of large scale wooden religious buildings such as Buddhist temples or Shinto shrines. The SUYANE is large enough to contain the overall subject, to protect rain at the stage of replacing the roofing, and protect moisture at the stage of repairing timber frames and plastering walls, for normally, total work at an event will take more than 10 years, long enough to damage them without proper isolation from exposure to the atmosphere.

For long years, SUYANE have been constructed with timber logs, each weighing about 25kg, which can be handled by one man without any machinery, and can be performed even at the top of a mountain.

As the system depends on experience, its structural durability is not always perfect. It often suffered from typhoon and snow. Modern rationalized structural design construction methods were required for large span renovation works.

## 2. CASE STUDIES

### 2.1 Case 1: Todaiji temple. Extensive repair work (1974-1979)

Todaiji temple is a wooden building for setting up a large Buddhist image that is about 25 m tall, and was constructed in 751. The building was burned twice during wars. And the one that we can see at the present time was reconstructed in 1709. This scale is 57 m width, 50.5 m depth, and 46.8 m height.

The work condition was severe as worshippers were allowed to visit the temple at any time, and no leakage of rain fall was allowed during roof replacement, therefore SUYANE was essential for the work.

The temple is the largest wooden structure in the World; (57 m x 50.5 m, and 46.8 m height.) And no doubt, SUYANE should be larger than the temple. Steel structure was adopted and structurally it should be completely independent from the temple at any detail.

The construction was subject to difficulties because of the small working space around the temple, which did not allow a large mobile crane to access it. A very special portal crane was examined, again working space was too small. And the expenses for special crane was subject to the economy for the work. In addition, no piling was allowed at the site because

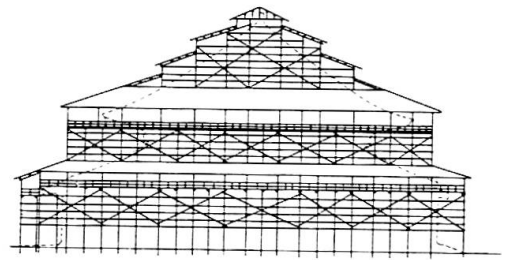


Fig. 1, Traditional SUYANE with logs at Higashi-Honganji temple, Kyoto

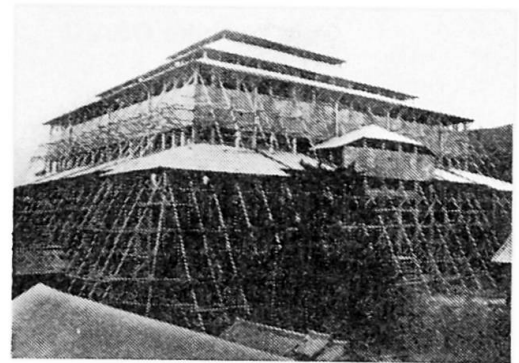


Fig. 2, Traditional SUYANE with logs

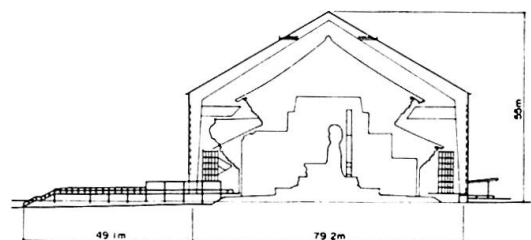


Fig. 3, Todaiji temple SUYANE Cross section

of the anticipated historical remains in the ground.

Under such conditions, the following method was planned;

- 1) Provide a temporary fabrication yard behind the temple.
- 2) Erect two spans of SUYANE at the fabrication yard.
- 3) Slide the fabricated element to the final position to cover the temple.
- 4) Erect further elements of SUYANE to slide to connect to the first element.
- 5) Repeat the process to complete the total SUYANE.

According to the plan, new soil was placed to cover the working area, and temporary concrete foundations with the rails for slide were provided on the new soil, without damaging the original ground.

Data, Total steel component; 2,300 tons

Maximum sliding component; 720 tons.

To cope with various possible difficulties, the following methods were adopted to secure the work:

- \*For slide; steel rollers were adopted.
- \*For pushing; hydraulic jacks were adopted.
- \*For the prevention of deflection of an element during slide; temporary steel members were provided to reinforce the element.
- \*For tightening and untightening the steel bolts; a newly developed high strength bolt, called "Slope detection bolt" was adopted, which was by joint development between Kawasaki Steel Corp. and Mitsubishi Electric Corp.

The work was performed along the plan, and achieved successful results.

## 2.2 Case 2: Kimpusanji temple Zaodo. Roof replacement;

It is told that Kimpusanji Zaodo was constructed in about 660, and was burned several times. And present building was reconstructed in 1591, its scale is 35 m width, 37 m depth, and 29 m height, and its scale is next of Todaiji temple. The work condition were as follows; The temple stood at an isolated location enclosed by three sides with cliffs. Only a narrow access road existed at the front, which did not allow a large crane and large SUYANE elements to access it.

Once a timber structure was considered for SUYANE, but the economical disadvantages,

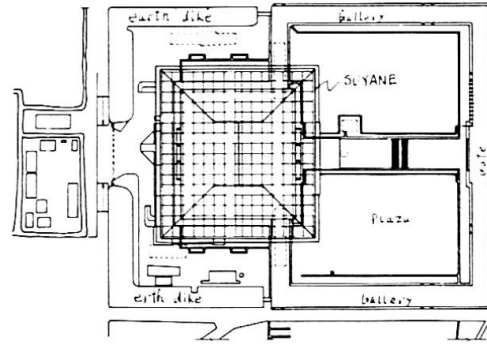


Fig. 4, Todaiji temple SUYANE Layout

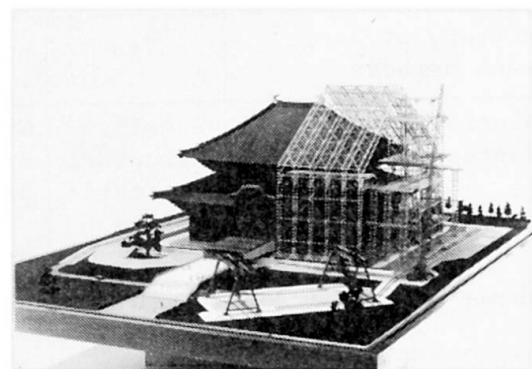
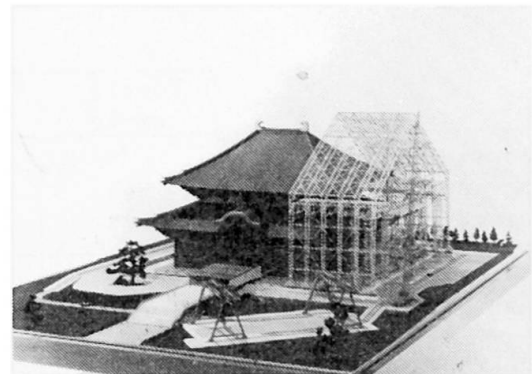
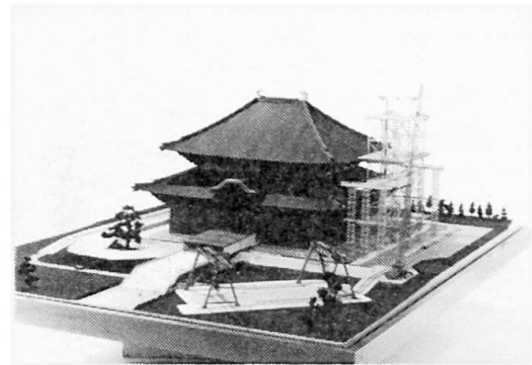


Fig. 5, SUYANE fabricate beside the temple was to moved over the building by rollers



mainly for adopting expensive timber, caused this plan to be abandoned. Alternation to adopt steel scaffolding pipes was examined and realized. In Japan, 48.6 mm dia., 2.5 mm thickness steel pipe was widely used for temporary scaffolding for civil construction.

Various difficulties were overcome as follows to perform the work successfully;

\*For the prevention of deflection of the large span SUYANE, provision of the temporary supports from the temple structure at a certain interval.

\*For the lack of structural section of a single pipe, bundled plural pipes to be used as a single structural member.

With those practices, the work was sufficiently performed.

### 3. CONCLUSION

The author believes each scheme adopted at each project was the most practical and inevitable solution, having amassed the possible technologies to meet with each work condition to reach satisfaction for all people concerned.

The adopted SUYANE schemes for the work conditions of the two projects are shown in the table below.

	Todaiji temple	Kimpusanji temple
Allowing worshippers to visit the temple during renovation	Yes	Yes
Support from temple structure	No	Yes/No
Delivery of large equipment to site	Yes	No
Delivery of large steel members	Yes	No
Solution; Adopted SUYANE	Steel structure Prefabrication	Group use of Scaffolding pipes

Scheme of SUYANE adopted to meet the conditions

Fig. 9, Kimpusanji temple, Zaodo SUYANE Section

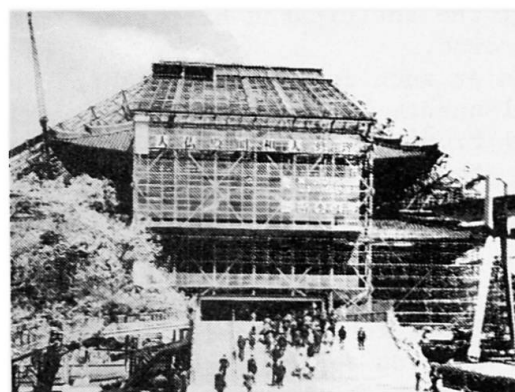


Fig. 6, Todaiji temple SUYANE Under construction



Fig. 7, Todaiji temple External view after renovation

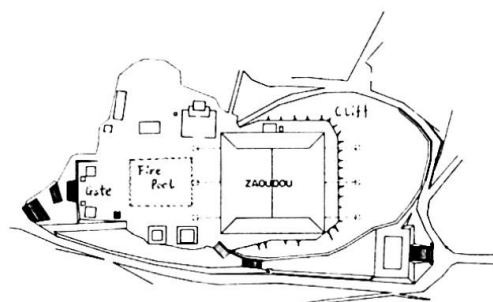
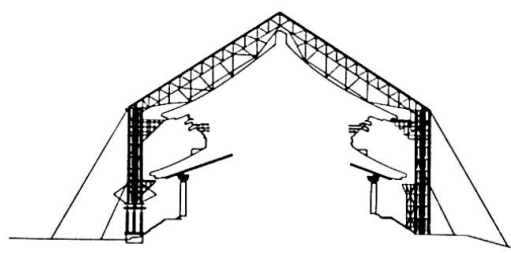


Fig. 8, Kimpusanji temple, Zaodo Layout



	Todaiji temple	Kimpusanji temple
Erection & dismantlement by mobile crane	No	No
Erection & dismantlement by portal crane	No	No
Erection & dismantlement by fixed crane	No	No
Erection & dismantlement by sliding method	Yes	No
Erection & dismantlement by workers	No	Yes

Construction method adopted to meet each condition

The author expects this report to encourage engineers to successfully confront similar work in the future.

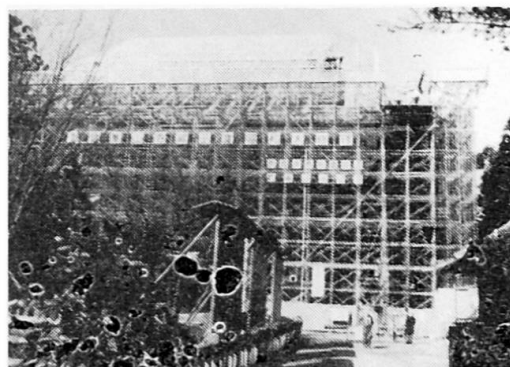


Fig.10, Kimpusanji temple, Zaodo SUYANE Under construction



Fig.11, Kimpusanji temple, Zaodo Manual removal of roof

Fig.12, Kimpusanji temple, Zaodo SUYANE Plural pipes bundles





Leere Seite  
Blank page  
Page vide