

Jigendo Temple

The Jigendo is the final resting place of Tenkai (approx. 1536–1643), the fifty-third abbot of the Rinnoji, who is famous for revitalizing the temple in the early seventeenth century. He was responsible for the construction of many of the buildings in Nikkosan.

Over his long career, Tenkai became a very high-ranking monk and built a close relationship with Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543–1616), the powerful general who unified Japan in 1603. Ieyasu placed Tenkai in charge of Nikko in 1613 and ordered him to prepare for Ieyasu's internment there. Tenkai himself personally chose Ieyasu's posthumous name, Tosho Daigongen, and constructed the Toshogu Shrine to house Ieyasu's physical remains. Upon his own death at the venerable age of 108, Tenkai was renamed Jigen, hence the name of this hall. The emperor conferred upon him the title of *daishi*, which is reserved for only the greatest of holy men. Only five Tendai sect figures have received this title.

At the end of this path is the prayer hall where visitors can offer prayers to Tenkai. Along the path are a series of small buildings that store the sutras and important documents that he collected during his lifetime. Tenkai's grave is behind the prayer hall and is accessible by climbing up the stairs and walking along the corridor next to the hall. The magnificent grave is in the form of a five-layered stupa, each of whose layers represents one of the fundamental elements in esoteric Buddhism. In order from bottom to top, these are earth, water, fire, wind, and air.