

Monju-ro (Important Cultural Property)

The Monju-ro is dedicated to the Monju Bodhisattva, the Bodhisattva of Wisdom, and stands high up on a ridge above the Konpon Chudo at the top of a long flight of stone steps. The Monju-ro is used for one of the four types of Buddhist practices (samadhi concentration). The practices are based on the Lotus Sutra and are described in the Makashikan, written by the monk Chigi, the founder of Tendai Buddhism. The tower is used for “constantly-sitting samadhi,” in which monks meditate in the full lotus position for ninety days without resting.

Saicho had planned to build a tower for meditation. After his death, the plan was realized by Saicho’s disciple Ennin (794–864), who had visited the Monju or Manjusri Bodhisattva Hall, a center of Manjusri worship on Mount Wutai in China. Construction began in 861, and sacred stones brought from Mount Wutai were buried in the five directions around the altar. After Ennin’s death, his disciples carved a statue of the bodhisattva Manjusri in which incense from China’s Mount Wutai had been placed and installed it in the hall.

In 1984, the Tendai abbot Yamada Etai made a pilgrimage to Mount Wutai, following in the footsteps of his predecessors. He returned with sacred soil, placing it under the lion on which the Monju Bodhisattva sits.

The bodhisattva Manjusri is said to preach with perfect wisdom, and many pilgrims come to pray for success with their academic studies or in entrance examinations.

Monju-ro is a designated cultural property of Otsu City.

C: Chinese

S: Sanskrit

Monju-ro (Monju Tower)

Monju (S. Manjusri)

Makashikan (C. Mohe zhiguan)

Chigi (C. Zhiyi)