

Statue of Saicho (also known as Dengyo Daishi, 767-822) as a Child

This statue is an image of the famous Buddhist monk Saicho (767–822) as a child. He founded Enryakuji temple, one of the most influential Buddhist monasteries in Japanese history, in 788. He is holding a small statue of Yakushi Nyorai, the Buddha of Healing, since according to legend it was said that he was born holding a statue of Yakushi Nyorai.

Saicho's parents lived in Sakamoto at the foot of Mount Hiei. They were childless, and in the hope of receiving divine intervention, his father spent seven days in retreat in a hut on Mount Hachioji, a small peak at the foot of Mount Hiei, praying to the Shinto deity Oyamakui no kami. On the fourth day, Saicho's father had a dream that his desire for a child would be fulfilled, and his son, Saicho, was born.

As a boy, Saicho was known by the name Hirono. He began his training in Buddhism at the age of twelve and was tonsured as a novice monk at fifteen, when he received his Buddhist name, Saicho.

When Emperor Kanmu made Enryakuji a guardian temple for the nation in 794, Saicho designated Hiyoshi Taisha as the protective shrine of Mount Hiei.

In Sakamoto at the Shogenji temple, there is a well from which water was drawn to wash Saicho after his birth, built on the site of Saicho's father's house. The nearby Tonanji temple was built to preach the Lotus Sutra to the people of Tozu Bay in commemoration of the monk's father.

This statue of Saicho as a child was erected in 1937 to commemorate the 1,150th anniversary of the founding of Enryakuji.