

Daiko-do (Important Cultural Property)

The Daiko-do was constructed after Saicho's death by his senior disciple Gishin (781–833) and completed in 824. Initially, the building was an annex to the Precepts Platform that was used as accommodation by the imperial envoy during ordination ceremonies. Later, it became a center of academic study for monks. The Lotus Ceremony for Broad Learning introduced by Ryogen (912–985) and the Tendai Assembly for Ten Lotus Lectures introduced by Saicho are performed in the Hall. Rituals and debates, such as the Nirvana Assembly and the Memorial Service for Dengyo Daishi Saicho, are performed here. Every four years, the hall is used for the Lotus Ceremony for Broad Learning, an important rite of passage required to become a fully-fledged Tendai monk.

The central image is Dainichi Nyorai, the Great Sun Buddha, worshipped as the supreme, primordial sun Buddha. Mount Hiei is a training monastery for the study and practice of four types of Buddhism: the teachings of Tendai Buddhism, Zen meditation, Nenbutsu chanting of the name of the Buddha, and Esoteric Buddhism. Esoteric Buddhism through “concealed teachings” offers Buddhahood and paradise on earth to the initiate through ritual practice and the contemplation of sacred images. The Daiko-do enshrines images of many who studied and practiced on Mount Hiei and went on to found new schools of Buddhism, which is why Mount Hiei is often called the mother of Japanese Buddhism.

New Schools and Their Founders

Enchin (814–891), founder of the Jimon branch of Tendai

Ryonin (1072–1132), founder of the Yuzu Nenbutsu school

Honen (1133–1212), founder of the Jodo school of Pure Land Buddhism

Eisai (1141–1215), founder of the Rinzaï Zen school

Shinran (1173–1262), founder of the Jodo Shinshu school of Pure Land Buddhism

Dogen (1200–1253), founder of the Soto school of Zen Buddhism

Nichiren (1222–1812), founder of the Nichiren school

Ippen (1239–1289), founder of the Ji school of Pure Land Buddhism

Shinsei (1443–1495), founder of the Shinsei branch of Tendai