

Konpon Nyoho- to

Ennin (794–864) became a disciple of Saicho at the age of fifteen, and stayed on Mount Hiei for almost twenty years. He travelled to the Kanto region before returning to Mount Hiei. When he was forty, Ennin fell ill and lost his eyesight, so he retired to a small hut in Yokawa, expecting to die. He spent three years practicing the four types of samadhi meditation, as well as the repentance rituals based on the Lotus Sutra, also known as the Lotus Samadhi. Eventually his health improved and he regained his sight. Ennin ground ink on an inkstone made of graphite hard enough to last a thousand years, and made brushes made of grass, and then made copies of the eight volumes of the Lotus Sutra, which he enshrined in a small stupa. This stupa was the origin of the Konpon Nyoho-do.

The practice of making copies of the sutras, in particular of the Lotus Sutra, and then burying them is said to have originated in Japan with Ennin. After purification before commencing, the person copying the sutra would follow certain rules such as the use of special water and a graphite inkstone, and not using animal-hair brushes. Between the Konpon Nyoho- to and the Yokawa Chudo is the Hall of the Sacred Water Well (Aka-ido), whose water is used for copying the sutras.

Ennin built his hut and stupa at the Central Cedar Cave (Konpon Sugi no Hora), which is named after a very large Japanese cedar tree next to it. Copies of the Lotus Sutra were enshrined in the stupa, along with statues of the historical Buddha and the Buddha of Abundant Treasures, both central figures in the Lotus Sutra. The two Buddhas together signify the non-duality of the ultimate and the historical, that at a given moment in the real world, one can touch the ultimate.

J: Japanese S: Sanskrit

Konpon Nyoho-do (Central Nyoho Stupa)

Yokawa Chudo (Yokawa Central Hall)

Repentance rituals based on the Lotus Sutra (J. Hokke senbo)

Lotus Samadhi (J. Hokke zanmai)

Shaka-nyorai (S. Shakyamuni Buddha)

Taho-butsu (S. Prabhutaratna Buddha)