

Eshin-do

This temple was built for Ryogen (912–985) by Fujiwara no Kaneie (929–990), an important courtier and politician who became regent to the emperor in 986. The hall enshrines an image of Amida Nyorai and is used for the practice of the *nenbutsu zanmai* or “samadhi concentration of praying devoutly to Amida Nyorai.” Later, Genshin (942–1017), a disciple of Ryogen, lived here in isolation at Yokawa, far from the distractions of the world, in order to concentrate on spiritual practices and his writing. In 985, at the age of forty-four, he compiled the Ojoyoshu, a collection of sutra passages and treatises dealing with the Gokuraku (Great Bliss) paradise of Amida. This text, in three volumes, became the foundation of the new school of Pure Land Buddhism in Japan. It provided guidelines for the Niju-go zanmai-e, a group of twenty-five Pure Land nenbutsu practitioners for whom Genshin is said to have also produced a “twenty-five samadhi ceremony.” Through the production of paintings such as the Rokudo jikkai-zu and the Amida raigo-zu, images of hells and paradise became fixed in the minds of Japanese people. Genshin was known by the honorary title of Eshin Sozu, after the Eshin temple in which he lived.

Samadhi Concentration of Praying Devoutly to Amida Buddha (*nenbutsu zanmai*)

Ojoyoshu (Essential Passages on Rebirth)

Niju-go zanmai-e (Twenty-Five Samadhi Assembly)

Niju-go zanmai-shiki (Twenty-Five Samadhi Ceremony)

Rokudo jikkai-zu (Drawing of the Six Destinies and Ten Realms)

Amida raigo-zu (Drawing of Welcoming the Arrival of Amida)

Pure Land Buddhism (Jodo Bukkyo)