

Shuon'an (Ikkyuji Temple)

Shuon'an is popularly known as Ikkyuji due to its association with Ikkyu Sojun, the famed Buddhist priest and Zen master who revived the temple in 1456. A wooden statue of him is enshrined at the temple. This statue was created by one of his disciples during the final year of the priest's life and is said to have been embedded with Ikkyu's own hair after his passing. The temple is also renowned for its gardens, which were designated a National Important Place of Scenic Beauty. There are ten Important Cultural Properties of Japan at Shuon'an Ikkyuji Temple, including the Main Hall, the Hojo (Abbot's Hall), and the statue of Ikkyu. The grounds also house a Museum Treasury with writings from Ikkyu, items used by previous emperors, and other treasures.

History

According to temple legend, Shuon'an was originally established between 1288 and 1293 as a Zen Buddhist training monastery. It was devastated by a fire during a war in the early 1330s and subsequently fell into ruin. However, in 1456, the famed Buddhist priest and Zen master Ikkyu Sojun revived the temple. Ikkyu continued his travels, but later came back to settle at Shuon'an, spending the last years of his life here before passing away at the age of 88. He was buried in the Sojun Obyo mausoleum in the annex of the temple.

Ikkyu Sojun

Ikkyu was a Zen Buddhist monk and poet. Born in Kyoto in 1394, he is thought to have been an illegitimate child of the emperor at the time. He was initiated into the community of temple ascetics at the age of 6. While he did devote himself to the study of Zen under renowned teachers, he is best known as a priest who worked outside formal institutions. Because of his vagabond-like travels and sharp wit, he also gained a reputation as being somewhat of a troublemaker. His eccentricity has been understood to express key tenets of Zen Buddhism.

Ikkyu became a talented poet, and his poetry collections are still treasured. He contributed greatly to infusing traditional poetry and art with the ideals of Zen Buddhism.