

Mt. Kinkei Overview

Mt. Kinkei, was a landmark and focal point for many of the temples in Hiraizumi during the twelfth century. The mountain, which is sometimes referred to as a hill due to its modest height, stands at approximately 98.6 meters, with a base elevation about 80 meters above the level of the Kitakami River.

History

Mt. Kinkei is cone-shaped and has a mound at the summit where sutras were buried. Sutras discovered there date from the time of the second Fujiwara lord Motohira and the third lord Hidehira. One legend claims that Hidehira ordered the summit to be raised in just one night. Hidehira reportedly had a golden cockerel and hen buried at the summit to protect Hiraizumi, and this legend is the source of the name of Mt. Kinkei (“golden cockerel”). Archaeologists have confirmed the presence of the sutra mound and sutra containers buried on the mountain, but no evidence of the golden birds has been discovered.

Location

Mt. Kinkei is at the center of three of Hiraizumi’s most significant Buddhist temples and Pure Land garden sites: Mōtsūji, Kanjizaiōin, and Muryōkōin. The summit lies due west of where the center of the main hall of Muryōkōin once stood, so that at the spring and autumn equinoxes the sun would have set directly behind both the temple and the mountain, creating a representation of the Western Paradise. Mt. Kinkei is due east of *Yanagino gosho*, the former residence and political base of the Northern Fujiwara clan.