

Gojū no tō, the Five-Storied Pagoda (National Treasure)

The five-storied pagoda is the oldest surviving wooden structure in Kyoto. Emperor Suzaku began its construction in 936 in remembrance of his father, Emperor Daigo, and the work was completed 15 years later.

The pagoda is 38m (ca. 125ft) tall, with the *sōrin* shaft at the top of the pagoda structure accounting for around one third of its height – 13m (ca. 43ft), adding to the majestic impression typical of Heian period pagodas. The inner wall of the lowest story is decorated with two sacred murals that are also designated National Treasures.

The first mural depicts the most renowned pair of mandala in Shingon Buddhism - *The Mandala of the Two Realms* (Ryōkai Mandala), a diagrammatic expression that consist of two individual representations: the Diamond Mandala (Kongō-kai) and the Womb Mandala (Taizō-kai). The former represents the unchanging principle of the universe and latter the dynamic force of Buddhahood in the world. Combined, they symbolize important levels of reality in the metaphysics of Japanese esoteric Buddhism.

The second mural, *The Eight Patriarchs of the Shingon Buddhism*, depicts the patriarchs of Shingon Buddhism. Founding patriarchs and the transmission of the secret teachings directly from master to disciple is an important characteristic of Shingon Buddhism. Its value for the monastery is underlined by the presence of the mural in the central structure of the pagoda. The two mural groups both represent rare sacred Buddhist painting dating from the 10th century of the Heian period, while representing essential teachings of the

school.