

Saishoin Temple and Fudodo Hall

Saishoin is a sub-temple of Byodoin belonging to Buddhism's Tendai School. Since the late seventeenth century, priests from Saishoin and its Jodo School counterpart Jodoin have cooperated to maintain Byodoin and to preserve this rare example of Heian period (794–1185) architecture for posterity.

Saishoin dates from 1654, when a Tendai priest from Shosenin Temple in Kyoto moved to Byodoin and established a temple, starting a new relationship between the Tendai School and Byodoin.

Fudodo Hall is the main hall of Saishoin. Its principal image is Fudo Myo-o (Sk. Achala), a powerful Buddhist "Luminous King" surrounded by flames and sculpted with a fierce expression representing the power to destroy worldly desires. This image of Fudo Myo-o dates to the late Heian period and is flanked by two smaller figures made in the seventeenth century. The hall houses a statue of En no Ozunu (also En no Gyoja), the eighth-century Japanese ascetic who founded Shugendo, a religion mixing Buddhism, Shinto, and other belief systems.

Beside Fudodo Hall, the smaller-scale Jizodo Hall enshrines a statue of Jizo, a bodhisattva regarded as a savior of all sentient beings and the special protector of children and travelers. Statues of Jizo are found in temples and along roadsides throughout Japan, reflecting his significance to people from all walks of life.