

Statue of Zenmyoshin

Zenmyoshin is a protective deity in the Kegon (Chinese: Huayan; Flower Garland) school of Buddhism. According to legend, a Chinese woman called Zenmyo (Chinese: Shanmiao) fell in love with Gisho (Korean: Uisang), the monk who introduced Kegon teachings to Korea. He could not reciprocate her feelings, but before he left China to sail back to Korea he asked Zenmyo to embrace Buddhism, and her faith was awakened. She then turned into a dragon that protected Gisho's ship and ensured his safe return to Korea.

Myoe established Zenmyoji, a temple dedicated to Zenmyo, as a nunnery for women whose husbands had died in battle in the early thirteenth century. This miniature statue of Zenmyoshin was enshrined at Kosanji in 1225.