

## **Daishoin: Tibetan Sand Mandalas**

These two large Tibetan sand mandalas have been displayed in the Kannondo Hall since 2006, the year the temple celebrated 1,200 years since its founding by the legendary priest Kukai (774–835). The Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of one of the schools of Tibetan Buddhism, was invited to attend the ceremonies because of the close doctrinal and historical ties between his religion and Shingon Buddhism, to which Daishoin belongs. The Tibetan monks accompanying the Dalai Lama created the mandalas on that occasion, a task that took three weeks to complete.

In Buddhism, a mandala is a visual representation of the cosmos and can take many forms. In Tibetan Buddhism, mandalas fashioned out of dyed sand are particularly common and represent purification. A mandala created for a prayer ceremony is usually dismantled immediately after the service in an act that symbolizes the impermanence of the material world. The mandalas at Daishoin, however, were left intact for the benefit of subsequent visitors to the temple.