

Daishoin: Kiezu no Reikado Hall

Kiezu no Reikado (“hall of the eternal flame”) on the summit of Mt. Misen houses a sacred fire said to have been burning continually ever since it was lit more than 1,200 years ago. Legend tells how the flame was ignited by Kukai (774–835), the founder of both Daishoin and the Shingon school of Buddhism to which the temple belongs, when he conducted ascetic rites on Mt. Misen in 806. The specific practice in question was the purifying *goma* fire ritual, which plays a key role in Shingon Buddhism and is believed to cleanse the mind of negative thoughts and energy.

Kiezu no Reikado has been destroyed by natural disasters several times over the years. It most recently burned down in 2005 and was rebuilt the following year, and a charred pillar from the old structure is displayed in a corner of the current hall. Kukai’s sacred flame burns on a long candle beside a Buddha statue by the back wall, while another fire smolders in a hearth in the middle of the building. The hearth fire is used to boil holy water in a large iron kettle, and visitors may pour the “healing liquid” into paper cups that are provided and have a sip.