

Daishoin: Prayer Wheels

Some of the staircases on the grounds of Daishoin, including the one in front of Maniden Hall, are furnished with dozens of cylindrical objects placed in a line along the length of the central handrail. These are prayer wheels (*maniguruma*) and are made of metal and inscribed with writing. The characters on them are from the Heart Sutra, a text used widely in the Shingon school of Buddhism to which Daishoin belongs. Spinning a prayer wheel is said to result in the same blessings as reciting the sutra.

Thought to have originated in Tibet, the prayer wheel has been used in Buddhism since antiquity. It was initially devised for those unable to read scripture, but eventually became a staple feature of Tibetan temples and can now be found at Buddhist temples around the world. The prayer wheels at Daishoin are a symbol of the temple's connection with Tibetan Buddhism—a relationship that can be explored further at Kannondo Hall.