

Muroji Temple

Located at the foot of Mount Muro, Muroji is the head temple of the Muroji branch of the Shingon sect of Buddhism. This area had been regarded as a spiritual location since ancient times, when people worshipped the Dragon God, said to live in a cave on the mountain. In times of drought, emperors would send messengers to pray to the Dragon God for rain.

The temple's official history began in the late eighth century, when a prayer service was held here for the ailing Prince Yamanobe (later Emperor Kanmu, 737–806). Following an imperial order, high priest Kenkei (705–793) established the temple site, and his disciple Shuen (771–835) had several buildings erected in the compound.

Muroji is also celebrated as a place of worship for women. Females were barred from the major Shingon Buddhist temple complex at Mount Koya, but as Muroji welcomed them, it has been known as the “Women's Koya” since the Kamakura period (1185–1333). Even today, women make up about 80 percent of visitors to the temple. Muroji houses a number of National Treasures, including statues of the Eleven-Headed Kannon and the Shakyamuni Buddha, the Kondo Hall, and the Five-Story Pagoda. Another attraction is the temple's lush natural setting, highlighted seasonally by cherry blossoms, rhododendrons, and maple leaves.