

Many-Jeweled Pagoda

The two-storied pagoda sits midway up Mt. Nyakuōji, at the top of 140 stone steps. It is the highest point in the Eikandō temple complex. From just below its eaves, a panoramic view of northern Kyoto is visible, including Heian Jingū Shrine and two of the mountainside sites where huge ceremonial bonfires (*okuribi*) are lit during Obon, the annual festival for the dead. Although the pagoda appears to contain a second floor, it is in fact a “skirt roof” (*mokoshi*) and is purely ornamental.

The many-jeweled pagoda is described in the Lotus Sutra, the primary scripture for the Tendai school of Buddhism, and many Tendai temples contain pagodas of this style. As described in the Lotus Sutra, a many-jeweled stupa (a precursor to the pagoda) rises up from the ground when Shakyamuni Buddha begins preaching the Lotus Sutra. Many-Treasures Buddha (*tahōnyorai*), who is described as sitting inside the stupa, finds Shakyamuni Buddha impressive and invites him to sit together. Many-jeweled pagodas can also be found at a number of temples of the Shingon school of Esoteric Buddhism, and they are believed to have been popularized by the school’s founder, Kūkai (774–835). The pagoda at Eikandō was built in 1928. It is topped with a nine-ringed finial (*sōrin*) whose tip is a sphere representing a wish-granting jewel (*hōju*).