

## ***Shomyo* Chanting**

*Shomyo* is a style of Buddhist chanting that developed in India before arriving in China, where it became particularly popular in Gyosan, Shandong Province. It was brought to Japan in the Nara period (710–794) and was popularized by Buddhist priests such as Saicho (767–822), founder of the Tendai sect, and his disciple Ennin (794–864), also known as Jikaku Daishi, who studied in Shandong Province.

Buddhism was not yet widespread in Japan during the Nara period, so early forms of *shomyo* rarely reached beyond temples, where priests composed and recited the chants. Despite this, rituals involving the mass recitation of *shomyo* were held with participants sometimes numbering as many as 100 people. One such ritual took place at the end of the tenth century to celebrate the completion of Enryakuji Temple. Another was held at the end of the twelfth century to celebrate the completion of Todaiji Temple in Nara. Over time, these events helped *shomyo* spread throughout the country.

Ohara has a particularly rich history of *shomyo* influence, some of which is reflected in the landscape itself. Two rivers are named for the tempos of *shomyo*: the fast-running Ritsugawa to the north of Sanzen-in Temple resembles the quick pace of *ritsukyoku* Japanese chanting, while the slower Rogawa River to the south is named for the more deliberate *ryokyoku* Chinese style. Indeed, the valley itself is sometimes called Gyosan, sharing the same name as the area of China where *shomyo* reached such popularity.