

Hōkyōji Temple

Hōkyōji Temple was established in 1278 by Jakuen (Ch. Jiuyan; 1207–1299), a Chinese monk. Jakuen came to Japan around the year 1228 and practiced at Eiheiji Temple under the tutelage of Zen Master Dōgen (1200–1253), the founder of the Sōtō school of Zen Buddhism in Japan. Hōkyōji is known as Eiheiji's *dai-ni dōjō*, or the first affiliate monastery of Daihonzan Eiheiji. Visitors to the temple can take part in a zazen (seated Zen practice) session, or even spend up to 10 days living and practicing alongside the monks who reside there.

Dōgen and Jakuen both studied and practiced at Tiantong Temple on Mt. Taibai in China under the temple's abbot, Zen Master Nyojō (Ch. Rujing; 1163–1228). After Nyojō's death in 1228, Jakuen followed Dōgen to Japan to study and practice at Eiheiji Temple, where he eventually received dharma transmission (*denpō*) from Zen Master Dōgen himself. Jakuen stayed at Eiheiji Temple until 1261, after which he began practicing solitary zazen on a large boulder at the base of Mt. Ginanpō, to the south of the city of Ōno. While out on a hunting trip, a regional lord of the Ijira family encountered Jakuen and was deeply moved by his fervor. The lord offered Jakuen the resources necessary to establish a temple of his own, and Jakuen chose to name the temple after China's Hōkyō era (1225–1227), during which he and Dōgen had studied together under Nyojō.

It is said that one day, when Jakuen was sitting in zazen, a dog and a cow suddenly appeared before him. Thereafter, the two animals accompanied him on his regular travels down the mountain to perform *takuhatsu* (asking for alms as Buddhist practice). When Jakuen died, the animals soon died as well. A small chapel dedicated to the dog and cow is located near Jakuen's grave on the grounds of Hōkyōji Temple.

Hōkyōji Temple and Eiheiji Temple have long shared a close connection. Giun (1253–1333), a disciple of Jakuen and the second abbot of Hōkyōji Temple, served as the fifth abbot of Eiheiji Temple beginning in 1314. Giun oversaw a massive reconstruction project after most of the temple's buildings were destroyed by fire in 1297. Vast amounts of lumber were needed to rebuild the temple complex, and Giun had cedar trees planted to make up for the many trees that were cut down. The trees that still remain from that time are called "the fifth abbot's cedars" (*godai-sugi*).

The life of a monk at Hōkyōji Temple differs slightly from that of a monk at a typical Sōtō Zen temple. Following in the footsteps of Jakuen, the monks walk 12 kilometers down the mountain to the city of Ōno to perform *takuhatsu* four or five times each month. Though monks at Eiheiji Temple rise each morning at 3:30 or 4:30, at Hōkyōji, a few extra hours of sleep are sometimes allowed for monks who are tired after a particularly difficult day of walking.