

## **Shichimen Daimyojin**

Keishinin Temple is dedicated to the dragon deity known as Shichimen Daimyojin, the Goddess of Shichimen. At Keishinin, there is a small museum of artifacts related to the deity that visitors can tour.

### *Nichiren and the Shichimen Dragon Goddess*

In 1277, according to legend, Nichiren was giving a lecture to his disciples and followers while sitting on a large rock near Gosoan, his hut on Mt. Minobu. During the lecture, a beautiful woman joined the group and listened to Nichiren's lecture. The others assembled quickly grew suspicious of the woman. Nichiren knew the woman was hiding something, so he approached her and asked her to show her true form. The woman smiled and asked for some water.

Using a jug of water the group had brought with them, Nichiren poured a drop of water onto the woman's hand. Instantly, she transformed into a dragon. "I am the Goddess of Shichimen. I live on Mt. Shichimen," she said. "As the guardian deity of the Lotus Sutra, I will continue to give the people peace of mind by protecting the mountains and guarding the demon gate at Mt. Minobu." The dragon then flew off toward Mt. Shichimen.

### *Nichiren Shonin and Dragon Goddess Sculpture*

The Keishinin Temple Museum has a sculpture of Nichiren Shonin and the Dragon Goddess made in the Edo period (1603–1867). This sculpture shows Nichiren above the goddess, which is unusual.

When the Dragon Goddess appeared to Nichiren and his followers, she vowed to protect the mountains and those who recite the Lotus Sutra. In this sense, the Dragon Goddess served Nichiren, which is why she is depicted below him in this sculpture.

Another interpretation is that Nichiren himself is worthy of godlike status. During the Edo period, the Nichiren sect grew and many followers began to revere Nichiren for his teachings. Some even believed that his accomplishments garnered him a place among the gods.

### *Dragon Goddess's Claw*

The Keishinin Temple Museum collection includes a unique fossil that is about 10 centimeters long, 6 centimeters wide, and has the shape of a large tooth or claw. It was retrieved from the Ichinoike Pond behind Keishinin Temple and is believed to be a claw of the Dragon Goddess.

#### *Nichiro Handwritten Scroll*

This scroll with the *daimoku* (mantra) *Namu myoho renge kyo* is in the calligraphy of Nichiro Shonin, Nichiren's first disciple and successor. It commemorates the founding of the Shichimen Keishinin temple.

The scroll dates back 700 years. After the death of Nichiren Shonin, Nichiro Shonin and his disciples climbed Mt. Shichimen. Seeing the large rocks and mysterious pond near the summit, they were convinced that the dragon god was present. They built a shrine to Shichimen Daimyoin at the place that would later become Okunoin Temple. This is said to be the beginning of the Nichiren sect's presence on the mountain. Later, the head temple was moved to the present location of Keishinin. Based on this history, it is said that Nichiro Shonin is the founder of the Keishinin temple on Mt. Shichimen.