

History of the Temple

RyotANJI temple has been linked with the Ii family for many generations and is located in an area that was originally under their control. The site is an out-of-the way agricultural area where a temple the size and scale of RyotANJI would not normally have been built, and its development is due in large part to their donations. The founder's hall pavilion is a rare example of a multistory structure in the area, and crests of the Ii family can be seen on the tiled roof.

During the Edo period (1603–1867), the Ii family gained influence, eventually being promoted to the post of lord of Hikone in modern-day Shiga Prefecture. Despite the family's move, RyotANJI remained their ancestral temple and the Buddhist memorial tablets of successive heads of the Ii family are still housed throughout the complex.

The temple garden is over 350 years old, and the rocks, shrubs, trees, and moss bed have been carefully placed. Like the temple itself, the garden was designed to show respect for the ancestors of the Ii family, with the building housing the mortuary tablet installation placed in way that the building could be seen from the temple's study.