

Hōrinji Temple

Hōrinji Temple is thought to have been built in 713 by the monk Gyōki (668–749) at the order of Empress Genmei (661–721). At the time of its construction, it was known as Kazunoidera Temple. Following the enshrinement of Kokūzō Bodhisattva by the monk Dōshō (798–875) in 829, in 868 the temple's name was officially changed to Hōrinji. Members of the imperial family, as well as many monks who eventually went on to establish other schools of Buddhism, are known to have visited the temple. Although the temple buildings were completely destroyed in 1864 and subsequently rebuilt, as an institution the temple is believed to have a history of more than 1,200 years.

Dōshō was a student of Kūkai (774–835), the founder of the Shingon school of Esoteric Buddhism. In 829, Kūkai suggested that Dōshō travel to Hōrinji Temple (then Kazunoidera) to complete his training with the Kokūzō mantra, which involved reciting the mantra 10,000 times each day for 100 consecutive days. It is said that on the final day of Dōshō's training, the morning star fell from the sky and burned the image of Kokūzō Bodhisattva into his robes. Inspired by this, Dōshō carved a statue of Kokūzō and enshrined it as the primary image of the temple. Dōshō is also credited with the construction of the Togetsukyō Bridge in Arashiyama, which was called Hōrinji Bridge until it received its current name more than 300 years later. Up until the mid-1800s, management of the bridge was put under the control of the monks at Hōrinji, who charged a toll and used the money they collected for upkeep of the temple and bridge.