

Gorinto Pagoda (Seafaring Monument)

The Gorinto is a five-tier stone pagoda erected in the Kamakura period (1185–1333). It is 6 meters tall and measures 2.4 meters across at the base, making it one of the largest of such pagodas in Japan. It is a nationally designated Important Cultural Property.

A *gorinto* is a type of Buddhist pagoda that was introduced in Japan during the mid-Heian period (794–1185). They are most often made of stone, and their shape symbolizes the five elements believed to make up the universe. From bottom to top, the tiers represent earth, water, fire, air, and ether (or void). Smaller versions of these pagodas often serve as grave markers or memorial towers and are common in Buddhist temples and cemeteries.

Unlike most *gorinto*, this one bears no inscriptions, so the purpose of its creation is unknown. According to the most popular tale, around 1175 a merchant returning from China was caught in a violent storm at sea. Fearing for his life, he prayed to the deity Hachiman for protection and miraculously made it to shore. In gratitude to the deity who answered his prayer, the merchant erected this stone pagoda. Based on this story, the pagoda is also sometimes called the Seafaring Monument.