

Adashino Nenbutsuji Temple

Adashino Nenbutsuji Temple is located in the Adashino area in the mountains of Okusaga, just past Saga-Arashiyama in western Kyoto. The place has served as a burial and memorial site since ancient times, and the name of the area itself carries the meaning of transience. It is said that Kukai (774–835), the founder of the Shingon school of Buddhism, established a temple in the area about 1,200 years ago to pray for the souls of the people buried there. Later, Honen (1133–1212), the founder of Japanese Pure Land Buddhism, transformed it into a temple that practiced a form of prayer called *nenbutsu*, a ritual recitation of the name of Amida Buddha to ensure one's rebirth in a paradise-like realm.

One of the most remarkable features of Adashino Nenbutsuji is Sai no Kawara, a dedicated space where approximately 8,000 stone grave markers of people who were buried in the area over the centuries are preserved. The temple grounds also contain several noteworthy Buddhist halls and statues, a grand Indian-style stupa, quiet cemeteries, and a serene bamboo grove. Various memorial services and rites are held at the temple over the course of the year, including a ceremony in late August when thousands of candles are lit among the grave markers.

Because Adashino Nenbutsuji is a place of memorial dedicated to the souls of the people buried in the area, visitors are requested to be quiet and respectful while exploring the temple.