

### **Site of the Five-Story Pagoda**

These foundation stones are thought to be the last remnants of a five-story pagoda that once stood on the grounds of Engyōji and appears in several historical illustrations. It is recorded that the fire that destroyed the Three Halls (Mitsu no Dō) in 1331 was started when a pagoda near the Great Lecture Hall was struck by lightning. That pagoda was inscribed with images of the five buddhas of the Diamond Realm Mandala. Accordingly, this pagoda is believed to have been inscribed with the five buddhas of the Womb Realm Mandala. This convention is common within the Tendai and Shingon sects of Esoteric Buddhism, in which pagodas serve as the sites of important rituals.

Within a Buddhist context, pagodas evolved from reliquaries that house the sanctified remains of the historical Buddha or other holy figures. Such relics, called *busshari* (Sanskrit: *sarira*) are crystal-like objects said to remain after the body of an eminent monk or nun is cremated. Although pagodas are built in a variety of forms depending on the country, period, and Buddhist sect of their association, in Japan they most often have three or five levels and are capped by nine-tiered bronze finials. In some cultures, pagodas are thought to symbolize Mt. Sumeru, the sacred summit at the center of the cosmos.