

Kongo Zen Sohonzan Shorinji Temple

Kongo Zen Sohonzan Shorinji Temple in the town of Tadotsu is the headquarters of Kongo Zen, a religion founded in 1947 by So Doshin (1911–1980). A follower of Kongo Zen seeks to “establish one’s self” and achieve “mutual happiness for oneself and others” through training centered on Shorinji Kempo, a method believed to strengthen both the body and the spirit. Shorinji Kempo is focused on martial techniques that So ordered and organized based on what he had learned in China, where he had been stationed during World War II. So’s teachings urge practitioners to use their abilities for the benefit of others and for the greater good, to achieve a peaceful society rich in both the material and the spiritual sense. Shorinji Kempo is practiced throughout Japan and in 38 other countries around the world.

Most of the facilities at Kongo Zen Sohonzan Shorinji are reserved for practitioners and are not open to the public, but walking through the red Niomon (Gate of the Guardian Kings) to the Tennoden, the main building, is permitted. At the Tennoden visitors can view a statue of So Doshin and a stone monument that commemorates the bonds between Shorinji Kempo and the Shaolin Temple in Henan, China, the place where the teachings of Giwamon Ken (one of the Shaolin martial arts) were passed on to So. The temple’s annual Daruma Festival in October is also open to anyone interested in the ways of Shorinji Kempo.