

Shohoji Temple

Shohoji Temple stands at the base of verdant Mt. Buppoji and enshrines Amida Buddha, the Buddha of Infinite Light and Life. In autumn, maple trees throughout the grounds of this Zen Buddhist temple turn vivid shades of red, particularly around the entrance.

History

Temple legend states that Shohoji was founded in 744 near the tomb of Prince Asaka (728–744) to memorialize the young prince. The founder, Gyoki (668–749), was a prominent monk who travelled the country spreading Buddhism and supporting public works projects. Though the temple was once a large mountaintop complex, it fell into disrepair during a period of civil unrest in the early fourteenth century.

In the mid-seventeenth century, Shohoji was reconstructed on a smaller scale at the foot of the mountain by the Tamura family, then lords of Bukkoji Castle. At their request, the head priest of Eigenji Temple,

Nyosetsu Mongan (1601–1671), revived Shohoji as an Eigenji school temple, part of the Rinzai sect of Zen Buddhism. One of the temple's important sponsors was Tokugawa Masako (Tofukumon'in, 1607–1678), who had been granted Wazuka estate lands upon her marriage to Emperor Go-Mizuno'o.

Temple Grounds

The main gate and the Buddha Hall are designated Tangible Cultural Properties of Kyoto Prefecture. The gate was originally donated by Tokugawa Masako from the Kyoto Sento Imperial Palace; the Buddha Hall can be dated to the mid-seventeenth century reconstruction. Inside the Buddha Hall is a seated statue of Amida Buddha that was likely made in the Edo period (1603–1867).

To the right of the Buddha Hall is a small hall for the worship of a deity important to the Koshin folk religion, which combines Taoism, Shinto, Buddhism, and other traditions. Next to the Koshin Hall is a relatively new set of twelve round-faced statues of the bodhisattva Jizo, each one posed

with a different Chinese zodiac animal. Up a small flight of stairs is a Jizo Hall containing another statue of Jizo, who is venerated as a guardian of travelers and children.

The main hall is generally closed to the public, but those who wish to enter may inquire with temple staff. A statue of Sei Kannon, the bodhisattva of compassion, is enshrined within. Tokugawa Masako is said to have prayed to this statue in her palace quarters before it was given to Shohoji.

Seasonal Beauty

The path to the temple is lined with lush maple trees thought to have been donated by Eigenji, the head temple in Shiga Prefecture known for its fall scenery. Here, the leaves turn brilliant shades of red and orange in autumn, and a large ginkgo tree adds touches of bright yellow. In other seasons, small patches of flowers bloom throughout the precincts, including azalea, iris, and sal trees (*Shorea robusta*).

Access

Walk approximately 8 minutes from the Wazukayama-no-Ie bus stop,
taking a left at the large intersection.