

Tōji-in Temple

History of Tōji-in Temple

Tōji-in was established in 1341 on the southern slope of Mount Kinugasa by the shogun Ashikaga Takauji (1305-1358), with Zen master Musō Soseki (1275-1351) of Tenryū-ji designated as founding priest. From the time of Takauji, Tōji-in has served as the family temple of the Ashikaga shoguns. This status was reinforced when another Ashikaga temple, Tōji-ji (located near the city center and closely associated with Takauji and his son Yoshiakira), was destroyed during the Ōnin War of 1467-77. Tōji-in, too, was devastated by fire on several occasions, but each time was rebuilt by powerful supporters such as Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537-1598) and Toyotomi Hideyori (1593-1615), testifying to the high regard in which the temple has always been held. Tōji-in continues to preserve many temple treasures and artworks from its 230-year association with the Ashikaga shoguns, making it a worthy stop during any visit to Kyoto.

Main Hall

Tōji-in's Main Hall (*Hōjō*) was originally constructed in 1616 by the general Fukushima Masanori (1560-1628) on the grounds of Kaifuku-in, a subtemple of the nearby monastery Myōshin-ji. The building was moved to its present location in 1818. The boards of the broad veranda on the Main Hall's south side are laid in such a way that when walked upon they produce a distinct squeaking sound. This type of construction, known as *uguisu-bari* (nightingale floor) was designed in ancient times to signal the presence of intruders. The paintings on the Main Hall's *fusuma* (sliding screens) are by the noted artist Kanō Kōi (17th c.). They were damaged at the time of the Meiji Restoration (1868) and also some years later when the Main Hall was used as a movie location, but they have since been restored and are on display once a year in mid-October, along with other temple treasures.

Reikōden

The central image enshrined in the Reikōden (Hall of Sacred Light) is Riun Jizō Bosatsu (Good-Fortune Jizō Bodhisattva). This was Ashikaga Takauji's favorite object of devotion, and is said to have been carved by the great Buddhist saint Kōbō Daishi (774-835). The hall also displays images of the Indian monk Bodhidharma, the transmitter of Zen from India to China; Musō Soseki, founder of Tōji-in; the fifteen shoguns of the Ashikaga clan, excepting the fourth shogun Yoshikazu and the fourteenth shogun Yoshihide; and Tokugawa Ieyasu, founder of the Tokugawa shogunate. Ieyasu's statue is said to date from his forty-second year, when he underwent a purification ritual at the great Shinto shrine Iwashimizu Hachimangu, located just south of Kyoto. Originally kept at the shrine, the image was relocated to Tōji-in during the suppression of Buddhism that followed the Meiji Restoration.

Garden

Tōji-in's garden, located in the northern part of the temple precincts, is traditionally ascribed to Musō Soseki. The eastern section of the garden is a secluded area centering around a pond known as the Shinji'ike (Mind-Character Pond), since it was designed to resemble the Chinese character for "mind." On the small island in the pond there once stood a building known as the Myō'on-kaku (Pavilion of Wonderful Sounds); traces of this building can be seen in the remaining foundation stones. The Shinji'ike garden is at its best in midsummer, when the flowers known as *hangeshō* (lizard's tail) come into blossom.

The section of the garden to the west, containing a pond known as the Fuyōchi and best viewed from the Shoin, is laid out in the shape of a lotus flower. Partitioned by ancient hedges, the garden features flowering bushes set off by a variety of other plants and creative rock arrangements. When the garden was restored in 1457 in commemoration of the one-hundredth anniversary of Ashikaga Takauji's death, a teahouse known as the Seirentei was constructed just north of the Fuyōchi Pond by the eighth Ashikaga shogun, Ashikaga Yoshimasa (1436-1490). This section of the garden is best appreciated while sitting in the Shoin enjoying the fragrance of tea and viewing the camellias in the winter and early spring, the azaleas in early summer, the gardenias in midsummer, and the rosemallows in early autumn.

The Grave of Ashikaga Takauji

Between the east and west sections of the garden is found the grave of Ashikaga Takauji, designed in the simple Muromachi-era *hōkyōin-tō* style. The large foundation stone features curved *kōzama* designs encompassing carvings of lotus flowers. On a higher stone one can see Chinese characters reading "the fourth month of the third year of the Enbun era [1358]."

Seirentei

On a low rise just north of the Main Hall stands the Seirentei (Clear Ripple Hut), a rustic teahouse with a quiet, reserved air. It was constructed in 1457 by the eighth shogun, Yoshimasa, who enjoyed having tea ceremonies here with friends such as the noted tea master Murata Jūkō (1422-1502) and the artist and poet Sōami (d. 1525). The actual tearoom is built on two levels: a lower level that is two tatami mats in size, and a slightly raised upper level that is one tatami mat in size. The upper level, for high status guests, afforded excellent views of the Fuyōchi garden to the south and, through the arched window in the rear, of Mount Kinugasa to the north. The outlook to the north is presently blocked by the buildings of Ritsumeikan University.