

Kurodani Konkai Komyo-ji Temple

In April 2012, Konkai Komyo-ji Temple held a memorial service celebrating the 800th anniversary of Honen Shonin, the founder of the Jodo sect (The Pure Land School) of Buddhism. In commemoration, a new Japanese garden (approx. 700 m²) was created on the west side of the already existing east garden of the main Hojo building. Shiun-no-Niwa Garden (purple clouds on which Amida Buddha rides to welcome the spirits) is a dry landscape garden that illustrates the three phases of Honen Shonin's life. There are three islands of pine moss to depict each phase. The scenic rocks represents important people in Honen Shonin's life.

- ① "Childhood: Beautiful Country"
- ② "Ascetic Practice (Training): Enryaku-ji Temple, Mount Hiei"
- ③ "Establishing the Jodo sect: Flourishing of Konkai Komyo-ji Temple"

In April 2006, Ueyakato Landscape Co., Ltd created this garden. Each of the scenic stones were specifically selected with great care by garden craftsmen for their color, texture, shape, size, and origin. (Example: Smooth stones show femininity and kind nature, while jagged stones depict masculine or strictness.)

Please enjoy the various characteristics of the scenic stones that represent the influential people in Honen's life in this tranquil dry landscape garden.



Ascetic Practice (Training) in Mount Hiei

- ① Genkō - Taught Seishimaru (Honen) at Enryaku-ji Temple, Kitadani area (west area of Mount Hiei) and his first teacher of Tendai Buddhism. His college from monastic studies was Kangaku, so he accepted Seishimaru.
- ② Kōen - Renown monk for his Tendai Buddhism knowledge at Enryaku-ji Temple, at Kudoku-in of the Otani area (east area of Mount Hiei). In 1147 (Kyūan 3) Genkō wanted Seishimaru to further his Tendai studies and sent him to study under Kōen. Kōen also ordained Seishimaru to monk-hood.
- ③ Seishimaru - Going to Mount Hiei with a letter from uncle Kangaku to study under Genkō. Later studied under Kōen and became a monk (age 15-18).
Notice the stone is not as red as his youth, but still red from inexperience.
- ④ Eikū - Scholar monk at Enryaku-ji Temple, Kurodani (west area of Mount Hiei). The disciple of Ryonin from Ohara School and the official inheritor of the "endon kai" teachings. Seishimaru studied under Eikū the longest.
- ⑤ Genkū - Seishimaru, became Eikū's disciple when he was 18 and received a monk name by taking the letters from his first and current mentoring monks. "Gen" is from his first mentor Genkō and "ku" from his current mentor Eikū.
- ⑥ Lake Biwa - Originally said to have be called "yoroi-ike" (armor pond) because Naozai Kumagai (warrior) washed his armor there before going into monkhood.
- ⑦ Sakamoto - It is said that when Seishimaru went to study under Genkō, he climbed Mount Hiei from this village that faces the Enryaku-ji Temple entrance.



Establishing the Jodo sect and This Temple

- ① Shiun Rock - Representing purple clouds with a smooth surface large enough for one to stand on and the shape gives a sense of movement."
- ② Honen Shonin - Size is much larger and a slight "v" shape in the front, same as the collar of a kimono or monk robes, and shows his knowledge, high status, and community popularity.
- ③ Genchi Shonin - Two days before Honen's passing, he was entrusted with Honen's last testament, the "Ichimai-kishōmon" ("One-Sheet Document").
- ④ Shinku Shonin - Honen's first disciple (followed 56 years). Inherited both the "endon kai" teachings and this place (current Kurodani) from Honen.
- ⑤ Tanku Shonin - Inherited both teachings and place from Shinku Shonin.
- ⑥ Naozai Kumagai - Genji warrior who became Honen's disciple from sorrow for defeating Heike noble, Taira no Atsumori (age 16) in Ichi-no-Tani Battle.
- ⑦ Egi Shonin - Constructed many buildings and labeled them "Shiun-zan Komyo-ji" (Komyo-ji Temple of the purple cloud mountain).
- ⑧ Unku Shonin - Emperor Kōgon's mentor and ordainer to monk-hood. In gratitude bestowed 2 kanji "金戒" thus "Konkai Komyo-ji Temple."
- ⑨ Kanazane Kujō - Regent (later Emperor's chief adviser). Honen's patron from 1177 to early Kamakura era. "Senchakushu" (Passages on the Selection of the Nembutsu in the Original Vow) was written by his request.
- ⑩ Shokaku Pine - Pine symbolizes longevity. The long reaching branches resembles a crane's wings, hoping for the flourishing of the Jodo sect.



Childhood (Okayama Prefecture)

- ① Father - Uruma no Tokikuni, a samurai and an official in charge of policing the area. He passed away from the wounds of a night raid that occurred at home when Seishimaru was 9-years-old. His last words to his son were "don't hate the enemy but become a monk and pray for me and for your deliverance."
- ② Mother - Hatauji, this is the prominent clan she is from. She was a powerful naturalized Japanese who came from a well-off family that was connected to the silk road and textile weaving.
- ③ Seishimaru - Honen's original name. Born on April 7, 1133 (Chōshō era year 2) as the eldest son. When he became 9, he followed his fathers last words to become a monk. Notice the stone is red coming from the word "aka" (red) which is also in the word "aka go" (baby).
- ④ Kangaku - Honen's uncle (mother's younger brother), who was formerly a monk in training at Mount Hiei but moved to Nanto (Nara) to maintain a bodaiji (Japanese Buddhist temple made to take care of the grave of ancestors of a designated family/clan).
- ⑤ Seishimaru - Honen (Age 9-15), following his father's wishes and started introductory studies to become a monk under his uncle Kangaku, at the bodaiji his uncle managed.