



EIHEIJI

永平寺





# Eiheiji

Eiheiji, "The Temple of Eternal Peace", is one of Soto Zen's two head temples. It is located deep in the mountains, near the rugged west coast of Japan, not far from Fukui City.

Dogen Zenji, the founder of Eiheiji, was born in 1200 AD. When he was 23, he went to China and devoted himself to true Zen practice under the strict guidance of Nyojo Zenji at Mt. Tendo. There Nyojo Zenji transmitted to him the true teaching of Shakyamuni Buddha. In 1227 he returned to Japan and began teaching, starting with the composition of the *Fukanzazengi* (Universal Recommendations for the Practice of Zazen). At first he lived at Kenninji Temple for three years, then founded his first temple, Koshō-Horinji, in Uji, Kyoto.

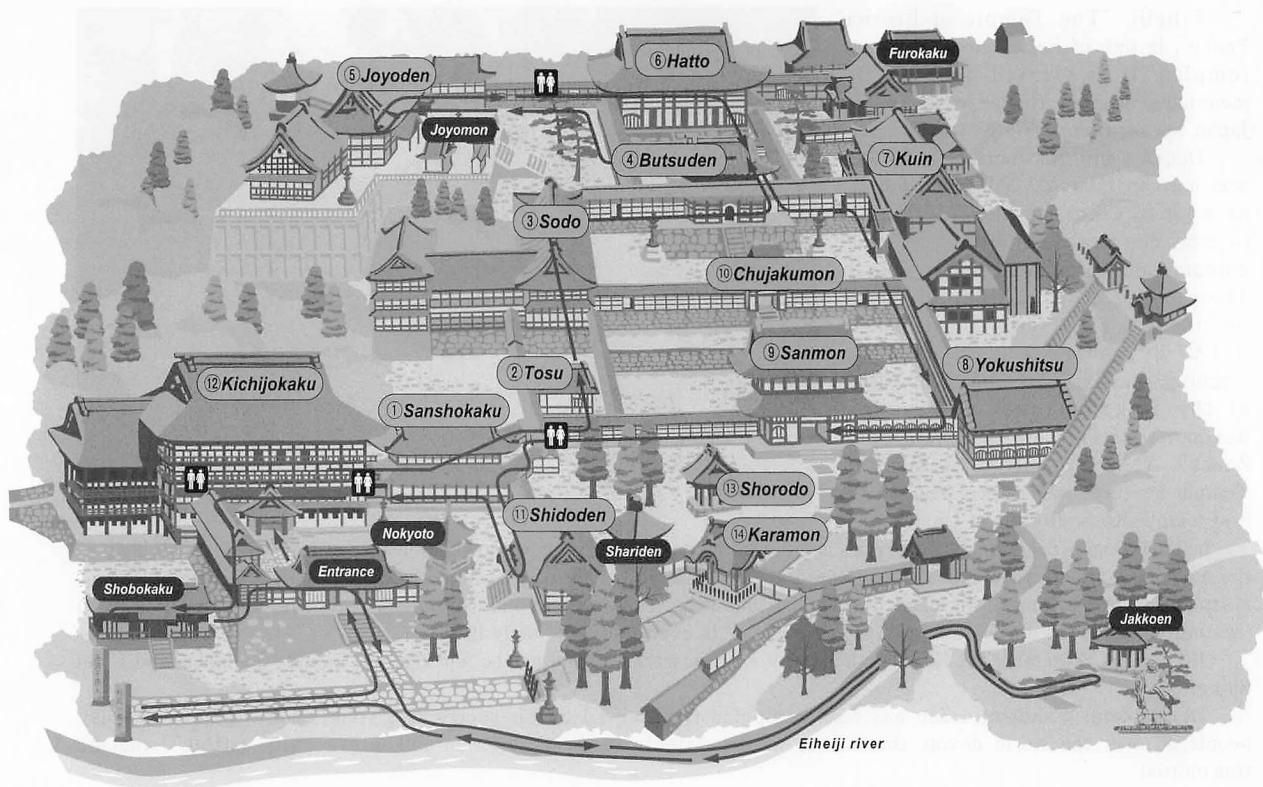
In 1244, Dogen Zenji and his followers came to Shihō-no-Shō in Echizen (now Fukui Prefecture) to establish deep in the mountains a place for the practice of zazen. He was offered land and other assistance for this by Yoshishige Hatano, a samurai who was one of his most devoted lay followers. Dogen thus founded Eiheiji, where he devoted himself to training his followers in the perfection of Zen practice in every action of daily life.

He died on September 29, 1253, leaving many written works, including the *Shōbōgenzō*, *Gakudo Yōjinshū*, and *Eihei Shingi*.

Dogen Zenji's authentic Zen has been scrupulously observed by his successors. Today, both ordained and lay people all over the world devote themselves wholeheartedly to the practice of *shikantaza* ("just sitting") that he transmitted.



# The Route for Visitors to the Temple





## The Route for Visitors to the Temple and Eiheiiji's Buildings

\* Seven main buildings

① *Sanshokaku* (Reception Hall)

② *Tosu* (Toilet) \*

③ *Sodo* (Monk's Hall) \*

④ *Butsuden* (Buddha Hall) \*

⑤ *Joyoden* (Founder's Hall)

⑥ *Hatto* (Dharma Hall) \*

⑦ *Kuin* (Administrative Building) \*

⑧ *Yokushitsu* (Bath House) \*

⑨ *Sanmon* (Main Gate) \*

⑩ *Chujakumon* (Central Gate)

⑪ *Shidoden* (Memorial Hall)

⑫ *Kichijokaku*

⑬ *Shorodo* (Belfry)

⑭ *Karamon* (Gate in the Tang Dynasty style)

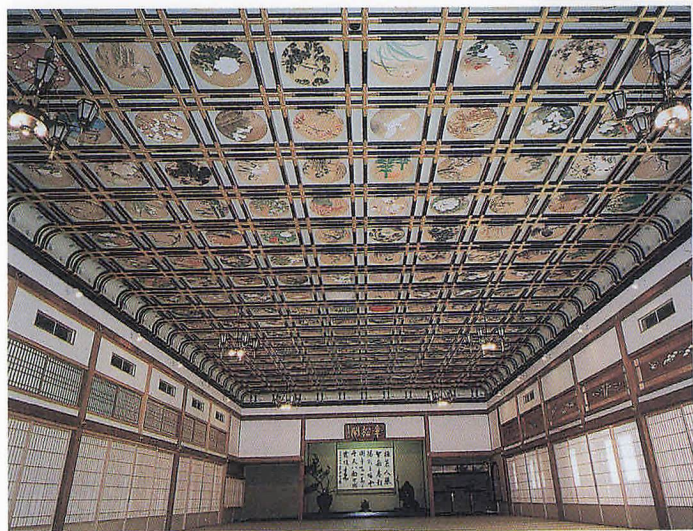
## RULES OF VISITORS

1. All visitors, even those who come only for sightseeing, are received and are expected to act as participants in religious training.
2. Please wear neat, modest clothing suitable for religious practice.
3. Be quiet all times, especially in the zazen, lecture, and ceremony halls.
4. When walking, either indoors or outdoors, always keep to the left.
5. Do not touch the bells, drums, other instruments, or altar furnishings.
6. Smoking is prohibited throughout Eiheiiji.
7. Photographing the priests and monk-trainees is prohibited.
8. No one who is intoxicated or who causes a nuisance will be permitted to enter or to remain inside the temple.
9. Do not step off the wooden corridor.

We hope this trip to Eiheiiji will be a memorable experience for you.  
Thank you for your attention.

# Sanshokaku

This reception hall is noted for its ceiling filled with 230 paintings of birds and flowers, the work of 144 important Japanese artists. In the tokonoma (alcove) is a statue of Hotei, the laughing Buddha. The room is used for lectures and zazen.





# Tosu

In Zen temples, the Tosu (Toilet) is one of the three important practice places where one must maintain silence (the others are the Monk's Hall and the Bathhouse). Dogen Zenji's Shobogenzo includes a fascicle entitled Senjo, describing the manners appropriate for the toilet. Some of these rules are followed even today.

The statue of the Vidya King, Uchusma, symbolizes the virtue of purification. Each person pays respect to this statue when entering and leaving the tosu, thus expressing their hope for purity.





## Sodo

The Sodo ("Monk's Hall") is where the monks in training practice zazen. This hall is lined with platforms called tan, on which tatami mats are placed. Each monk-trainee has just one tatami mat, about one by two meters, on which to do zazen, eat and sleep. Not only zazen, but eating and sleeping as well are performed as religious practices. Talking or reading is never allowed here.

At the center of the hall is a statue of Manjusri Bodhisattva, the Bodhisattva of Wisdom.



*Shuku: breakfast gruel*





## *Butsuden*

The Butsuden ("Buddha Hall") with its stone floor and double roof, copies the structure of Keitokuji Temple on Mount Tendo, where Dogen practiced in China. Here as well, on the main altar there are three statues of the Buddha, the Tathagatha of the three worlds: past, present and future. The frieze of carvings concerns Buddhist teachings particularly important for monks in training. On the tablet hung above the altar is written "Kito", which means "prayer": a prayer for all sentient beings.



## Joyoden

The Joyoden (Founder's Hall) is the mausoleum of Dogen Zenji, who is also known by his title of Koso Jōyō Daishi ("Eminent Ancestor, Upholder of Light, Great Teacher"). The main altar contains the image and ashes of Dogen Zenji, plus images of several of his first successors.



*Upholder of Light*

Following the custom initiated by Dogen's successor, Ejo Zenji, the images are served offerings daily, just as if they were living teachers. In this way, respect and appreciation are shown for their teachings, which live on until this day.

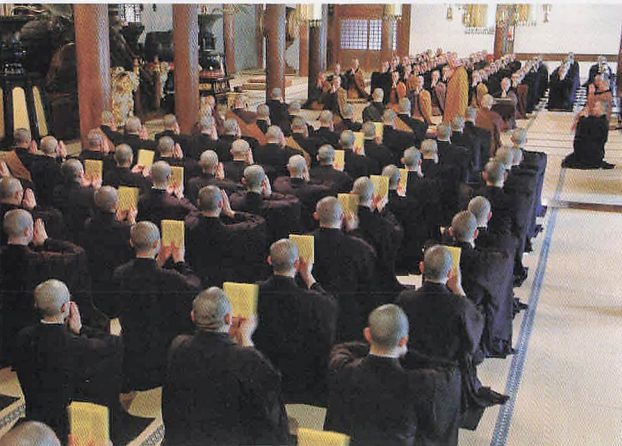
On the right in the back of the hall, another altar holds memorial tablets of all past abbots of Eihei-ji. The memorial tablets of other priests who have contributed to Soto Zen are installed on the right and left sides of the hall.





## *Hatto*

Daily morning services, other important ceremonies and lectures are held in the Hatto ("Dharma Hall"), which was rebuilt in 1843. On the inner altar is an image of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva (the Bodhisattva of Compassion).



In front of the altar are four white lions (shishi) called the a-un no shishi.

A-un in Japanese (or "Om" in Sanskrit) represents all of the sounds of the language. The Buddha's teaching used words as well as actions to express the truth which is in harmony with everything in the universe.



## *Kuin*

The kitchen is located in the Kuin, a three-story building with a basement. Meals are prepared in this large kitchen on the first floor for resident monks and guests. All food is vegetarian. In the Tenyo Kyokun ("Instructions for the Zen Cook"), Dogen Zenji wrote, "Cooking so-called rich, creamy food is not necessarily superior, cooking plain vegetable soup is not necessarily inferior. When you are given plain vegetables to prepare, you must treat them the same as rich, creamy food, with straightforward mind, sincere mind, and pure mind. The reason is that when they converge in the pure great ocean assembly of Buddha Dharma, you recognize neither rich, creamy tastes nor the taste of plain vegetables, but only the flavor of the one great ocean."





# Yokushitsu

According to the traditional rule, monks shave their heads and bathe in the Yokushitsu (Bath House) every fifth day (every time the date contains a 4 or 9). In the morning, trainees shave each other's heads, and in the afternoon they enjoy a bath. Before the bath, each monk makes three bows while reciting "We bathe vowing to benefit all beings; may our bodies and minds be purified both inwardly and outwardly." The altar holds an image of Bhadrapala Bodhisattva, also called Kengo Daishi ("Great Teacher, Resolute Protector"). It is said that Bhadrapala Bodhisattva awakened when stepping into the water, so this bodhisattva is traditionally associated with the bath. The statue here reflects the hope of the trainees to manifest the Buddha's teaching in all of their actions.



# Sanmon

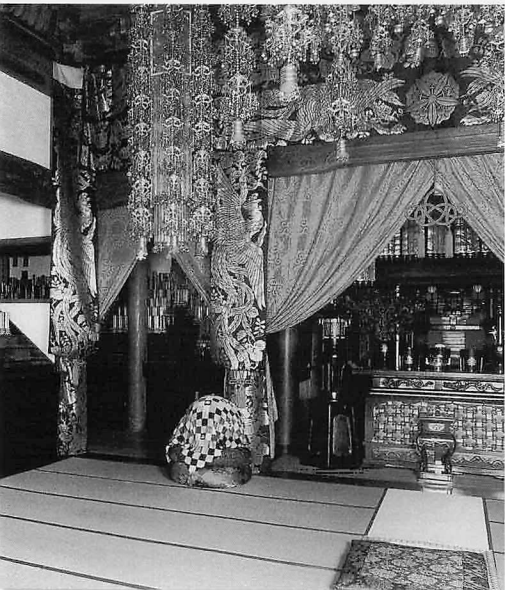
The main gate is called the Sanmon ("Mountain Gate"), because Buddhist temples are regarded as mountains. Rebuilt in 1749, this is the oldest of Eihei-ji's buildings.

In the upper level is the Rakando ("Arahats Hall") containing images showing Shakyamuni Buddha delivering the sermon recorded in the Avatamsaka Sutra to the 500 arahats (the Buddha's disciples). The Four Divine Kings, who guard the dharma, stand at the four corners of the entrance of the Mountain Gate.





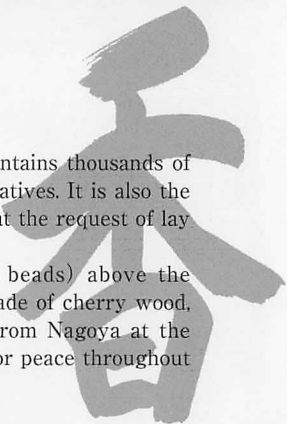




## *Shidoden*

The Shidoden (Memorial Service Hall) contains thousands of memorial tablets for lay followers and their relatives. It is also the place where memorial services are performed at the request of lay followers for their relatives and friends.

The big ojuzu (set of Buddhist prayer beads) above the entrance to the Shidoden is 18 meters long. Made of cherry wood, the prayer beads were offered by a layman from Nagoya at the end of World War II, as a symbol of his hope for peace throughout the world.





# Kichijokaku

A large, modern building, the Kichijokaku is a study and training center for lay practice. The building contains its own kitchen and baths, reception and meeting rooms plus an information desk, two floors of sleeping quarters for visitors (sanrosha), and halls for lectures and zazen. The fourth floor holds the Zendo ("Zazen Hall") for visiting priests and those who come for Zen practice (sanzensha).

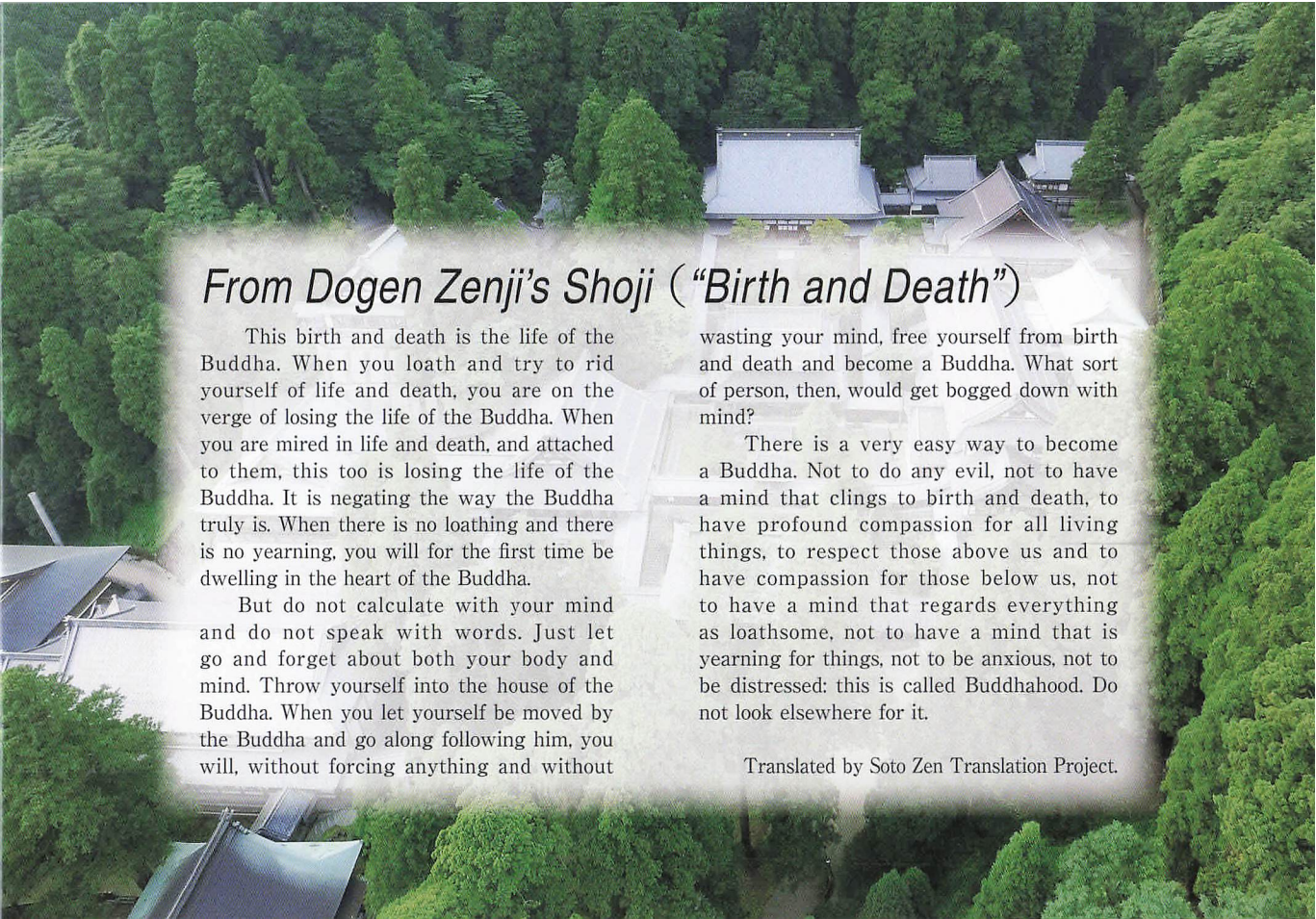


# Shorodo

The bell in this Shorodo (“Belfry”) is called the o-bonsho (the great Brahman bell). A monk-trainee rings this bell four times every day: during morning zazen, at the start of midday service, at dusk and at bedtime. It is also rung to announce special ceremonies. The monk-trainee bows to the floor each time he strikes the bell, and prays that the sound will awaken all beings.







## *From Dogen Zenji's Shoji ("Birth and Death")*

This birth and death is the life of the Buddha. When you loath and try to rid yourself of life and death, you are on the verge of losing the life of the Buddha. When you are mired in life and death, and attached to them, this too is losing the life of the Buddha. It is negating the way the Buddha truly is. When there is no loathing and there is no yearning, you will for the first time be dwelling in the heart of the Buddha.

But do not calculate with your mind and do not speak with words. Just let go and forget about both your body and mind. Throw yourself into the house of the Buddha. When you let yourself be moved by the Buddha and go along following him, you will, without forcing anything and without

wasting your mind, free yourself from birth and death and become a Buddha. What sort of person, then, would get bogged down with mind?

There is a very easy way to become a Buddha. Not to do any evil, not to have a mind that clings to birth and death, to have profound compassion for all living things, to respect those above us and to have compassion for those below us, not to have a mind that regards everything as loathsome, not to have a mind that is yearning for things, not to be anxious, not to be distressed: this is called Buddhahood. Do not look elsewhere for it.

Translated by Soto Zen Translation Project.





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