

Official Name: Hinoosan Kanshinji
Sect: Koyasan School of Shingonshu
Foundation: Approximately 1200 years ago.

“Hinoosan” refers to the location of the temple and “Kanshinji” alludes to the Buddha seeing the minds of suffering people and helping them, rescuing them from their suffering. Toward the end of the 7th century, the temple was founded by an ascetic mountain priest, Enno Ozunu, and was named Unshinji. In the middle of the 9th century, Kobo-Daishi visited this temple and prayed to the Great Dipper for the coming of its deity. Later, the name of the temple was changed from Unshinji to Kanshinji. Kanshinji has three National Treasures and many important cultural assets. Kanshinji also has other cultural assets such as the Imperial Mausoleum of Emperor Gomurakami of the Southern Court, the Temple of the Kusunoki family where Masashige Kusunoki studied while young and Masashige’s tomb. In the early 14th century, Masashige Kusunoki was a leading samurai (warrior) of the Southern Court. At that time, Japan was divided into two Courts, the Northern Court and the Southern Court, and they governed simultaneously.

Main Gate:

It is not clear when the first gate was constructed. The gate was reconstructed by Toshitsugu Honda, the lord in this area in the middle of the 17th century.

Sojiin:

The memorial stone reads that the temple was called Sojiin, which was one of the branch temples of Kanshinji. In the middle of the 14th century, the temple was used as temporary quarters for Emperor Gomurakami.

Chu-in:

This temple is also a branch temple of Kanshinji. In the early 14th century, Masashige Kusunoki studied here from age 8 to 15. He learned how to spend his daily life and trained to become a faithful war lord for the Emperor.

Karitei Motendo:

The structure is called Karitei Motendo, one of the important cultural assets of Japan. The first structure was completely destroyed by a fire and was

reconstructed by Masatsura Kusunoki, Masasige's son. This structure has been registered as an important cultural asset due to its superior construction techniques. The sacred object of Karitei Motendo is called Kishimojin, a deity with miraculous powers to ease the delivery of and raising of children. A peculiar custom in Japan is to find the syncretism of Buddhism and Shintoism whereby a shrine can be found within a temple and vice versa. The main purpose of this custom is mutual protection of the two religions.

Seven Earthen Mounds:

Seven earthen mounds are evident where the Great Dipper which Kobo-Daishi prayed for is enshrined. They are the only mounds of this type in Japan. On February 3 every year, the Star Festival is celebrated here and many people visit these mounds to pray to ward off evils.

Main Hall:

The main hall of this temple was sponsored by Jichie, a disciple of Kobo-Daishi, and was actually constructed by Shinjo, a disciple of Jichie in the first half of the 9th century. After that, Masashige Kusunoki reconstructed the main hall in the middle of the 14th century. The construction style of the new main hall is a mixture of Japanese and foreign styles and is registered as a national treasure. The principal image enshrined in the main hall is Nyoirin Kannon Bosatsu, a national treasure. Nyoirin Kannon Bosatsu is said to answer the prayers of humans and relieve them from difficulties. Attendants on both sides of the Buddha are Fudou-Myouo and Aizen-Myouo, also both designated important cultural assets. Fudou-Myouo is said to lead those who do not obey the teaching of the Buddha. Aizen-Myouo is a deity to save those who are worrying about love and to guide them out of anguish and lead them to enlightenment. These statues of Buddha and deities are not usually shown to the public and are preserved in the miniature shrine.

Tatekake-no-Tou:

In the middle of the 14th century, the construction of this pagoda started with prayer for the success of the Southern Court. This pagoda is another important cultural asset. Masashige Kusunoki ordered the construction of the three storied pagoda first. However, when he died at Minatogawa in Kobe, the pagoda had not been completed yet, and remains incomplete to this day.

Imperial Mausoleum of Gomurakami (Hinoo Mausoleum):

Emperor Gomurakami was the 97th emperor of Japan. He performed government duties at Sojinn. After that, he moved to Sumiyoshi Shrine and died there in 1368.

Mausoleum of Dokou-Daishi:

The hemispheric form structure is the tomb of Jichie, founder of Kanshinji. He died here in 847. After his death, his great works were highly appreciated by Emperor Gomomozono and was given the posthumous name Doko-Daishi in the second half of the 18th century. According to the legend, he wished to attain Buddhahood while still alive in the same way as Kobo-Daishi. Therefore, he made a small room in the hemispheric structure and entered a state of intense concentration and died there in the middle of the 9th century.

Tomb of the Head of Masashige Kusunoki:

In the tomb, Masashige Kusunoki's head is enshrined. He was killed in Minatogawa in 1336. Masashige's head was decapitated and sent to Masashige's family staying at the Chu-in of Kanshinji by order of General Takauji Ashikaga, head of the opposition. The wording of "Hirihoukenntenn" on the stone monument shows the philosophy of Masashige Kusunoki, which means the following; "It is the proper way of living to follow the teaching of heaven (god, Buddha) at any time rather than to seek immediate profit; human laws and human powers will result in the increase of difficulties in the future."

Treasure Hall (Treasure Museum):

Kanshinji has many images of Buddha and other cultural properties. Those exhibited were carved about 900 years ago in the late Heian period. Images of Buddha exhibited are classified as follows;

- Nyorai: Image of the highest enlightened Buddha who reached the truth.
- Bosatsu: Image of Bodisattva. Bodisattva is in the state of seeking enlightenment.
- Myouou: Kings of wisdom. King of wisdom with an angry appearance is one of the incarnations of Buddha.
- Tennbu: Heavenly deities, Deva. Heavenly kings or beings living in heaven.

Main Images of Buddha in Treasure Hall:

- 11-faced Kannon Bosatsu: A Buddha with 11 faces, who always observes the condition of humans yearning for release from suffering.
- Jizou Bosatsu: Guardian deities for children who can protect children from the demons of hell. Bosatsu saves people from suffering in the world after death. The world after death includes 6 hell realms: hungry ghosts, animals, fighting, humans and heaven.
- Shaka Nyorai: Founder of Buddhism.
- Yakushi Nyorai: A Buddha who answers to prayers for the recovery from illness or for the longevity of humans.
- Mirokunyorai: A Buddha who will take over Shaka Nyorai.
- Sho Kannon Bosatsu: A Buddha who is in this world in 33 different styles to save humans.
- Seisou Zazou: Enlightened holy priest.
- Other Treasures: Tablet of Kanshinji, lantern (important cultural asset), statue of devils, armor, and painted images (Masashige and Masatsura Kusunoki).

Imperial Gift Hall:

This building was a temporary banquet hall which was constructed in Kyoto Gyoen in memory of the accession to the throne of Emperor Showa in 1928. After that, the banquet hall was divided into 3 buildings and one of them was transferred here and reassembled. The Imperial gift hall is used for the mental and physical training of young people. This hall is designated as national registered cultural asset.