



Jōmyō-ji 浄妙寺

This temple was founded in 1188 by priest Taikō Gyōyū (退耕行勇) under the name Gokuraku-ji (極楽寺). Its sponsor was Ashikaga Yoshikane (足利義兼). The temple became one of the Ashikaga family funeral temples.

History

At this time, Japan faced a time of many changes. During the previous Heian Period (latter half), the aristocracy lived in the sense of *Mappō* (Latter Day of the Dharma), when it is impossible to gain enlightenment by your own efforts. At the same time, political patterns changed and we entered the Kamakura period where the *bushi*, the fighting class, took power.

Minamoto no Yoritomo received the title *Sei Taishōgun* and founded his regency in Kamakura. Yoritomo was closely connected to the Hōjō family which later provided the regents. At the end of the Kamakura period, Emperor Go-Daigo used the family of the Ashikaga to restore his power around 1333. This family, however, broke with Go-Daigo, installed their own emperor, and became the new *shōguns* of the Muromachi Period. Jōmyō-ji was an influential temple during these times.

At first, Gokuraku-ji/Jōmyō-ji belonged to the Shingon-shu Buddhist school, but after Kenchō-ji was built as the first Zen monastery and Geppō Ryōnen, who was a disciple of Lanxi Daolong, became head priest, Gokuraku-ji changed to the Kenchō-ji line of Rinzai-shu Zen Buddhism.

This happened between 1257 and 1288 and the temple was renamed Jōmyō-ji at the same time.

Taikō Gyōyū
1163 - 1241

He was a disciple of Eisai who first introduced Zen Buddhism to Japan.

Lanxi Daolong
1213 - 1278

(Rankei Dōryū)
A Zen monk from China voluntarily traveled to Japan to teach Zen Buddhism. In 1253 he became head priest of Kenchō-ji after an invitation of Hōjō Tokiyori.

Rinzai-Shū

臨濟宗

The Rinzai school is the second largest school of Japanese Zen Buddhism, after the Sōtō school and followed by the Ōbaku school