

A Guide to Enjoying the Exhibition

Saichō and Tendai Buddhism



Saichō (767–822)

Dengyō Daishi (Priest Saichō)
Muromachi period, 15th c.
Enryaku-ji Temple, Shiga

Who was Saichō?
How did his "Tendai School" flourish
in Japan? Let's find out together!



Who was Saichō?

Nara Period

767 Born in Ōmi province (today's Shiga prefecture). Very talented from an early age.

780 Enters the Buddhist path at age 13.

785 Becomes an ordained monk at age 20.
Three months later begins religious practice on Mt. Hiei.

I decided to not descend from the mountain until I had the strength to lead others to salvation.



Whoa...

788 Builds the first temple hall on Mt. Hiei.
Enshrines a Buddhist statue that he carved himself and lights the "Inextinguishable Dharma Lamp"

Encounters Tendai texts and sutras brought from China in the Nara period.
Moved by the *Lotus Sutra* teaching that "all can become buddhas."

804 Travels to China with the support of Emperor Kanmu.
Studies Tendai (Ch: Tiantai) teachings on Mt. Tiantai and other locations.

805 Return to Japan.

806 Tendai is officially recognized as a school of Buddhism in Japan, and its teachings begin to flourish.

815 Makes plans to establish new standards suitable for ordained Tendai monks and to have them recognized by the state.

Other Buddhist schools oppose him, but he insists that the new era calls for a new kind of Buddhist monk.

Revolutionary!

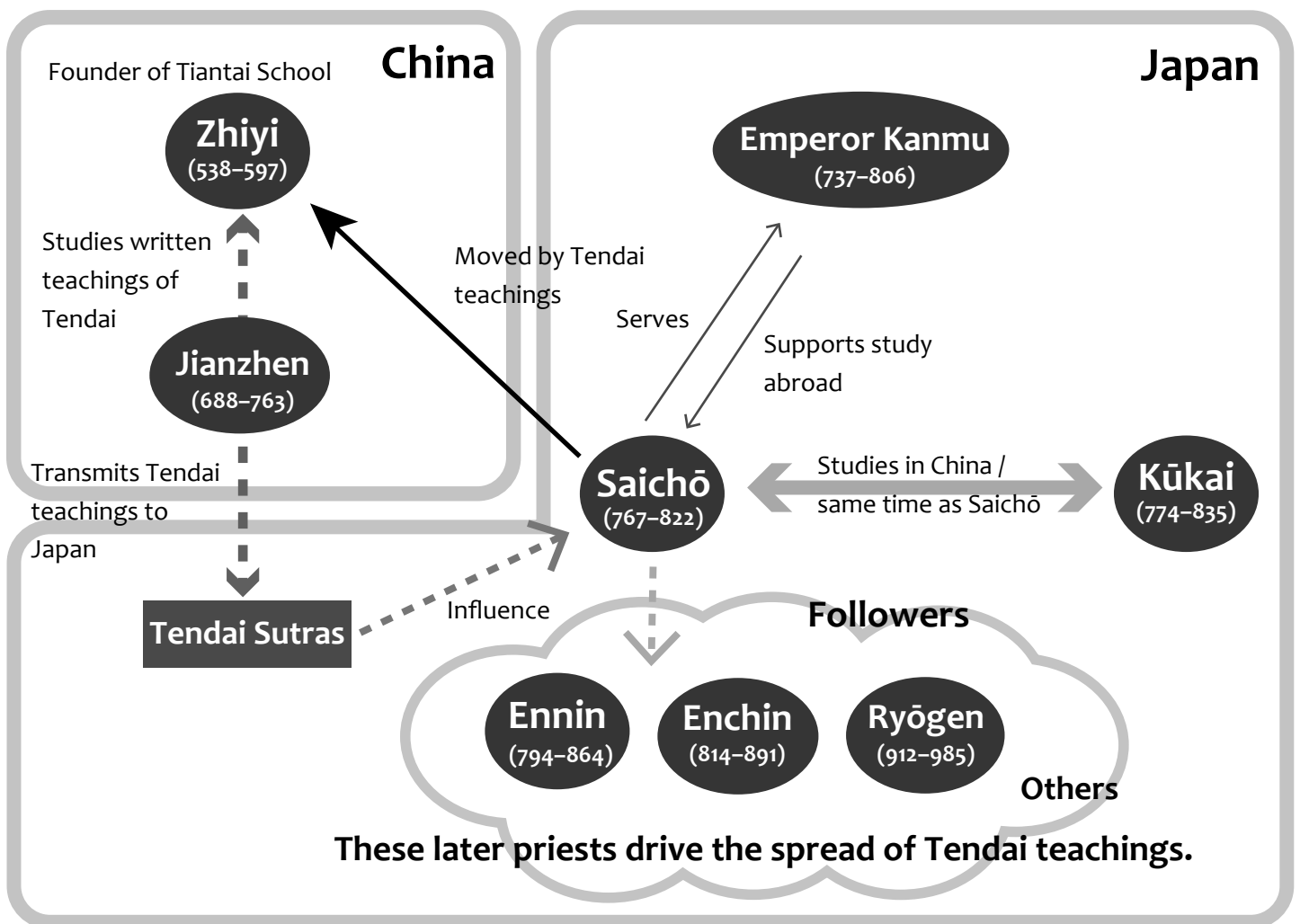


822 Emperor Saga approves a new system of certification for monks at Mount Hiei.
Saichō dies the following day.

Saichō founded the temple Enryaku-ji, which produced many influential monks.
The diverse teachings that they preached to guide humankind to salvation had a major impact on the development of Japanese culture.

Heian Period

Saichō's Network



Important Cultural Property, *Lotus Sutra* Vol. 5
Heian period, 10th c. Enryaku-ji Temple, Shiga. (Vol. 5 on view Apr. 12–May 1)

Buddhahood is Open to All!

The *Lotus Sutra* is the most exalted sutra of Tendai Buddhism. It teaches that anyone can become a buddha and was copied in large quantities throughout the Heian period. This scroll was copied on indigo paper in silver characters. It opens with a painting depicting a scene from the sutra. It is believed to have been copied by Saichō's disciple Ennin.

A Master's Robe

Saichō received this robe from his master Xingman at Folang-si Temple on Mt. Tiantai. The most suitable robes for a Buddhist monastic were thought to be those made from discarded rags stitched together. This robe echoes the same idea by sewing together and reinforcing small pieces of cloth and unraveled fibers.



National Treasure Seven-Panel Priest's Robe
China, Tang dynasty, 8th c. Enryaku-ji Temple, Shiga. (On view Apr. 12–May 1)

Saichō and the Tendai Yakushi

Enryaku-ji Temple's Konpon Chūdō enshrined an icon carved by Saichō that became an object of intense devotion. This statue from Chōgen-ji Temple is one of many copies that were made. The gentle sloping of its crown, abbreviated forehead, and Y-shaped drapery folds are among the features that provide clues to the form of Saichō's original statue.



They say that Saichō's Yakushi had a golden body and red robes,

but this statue is completely gold!



Important Cultural Property, Yakushi Nyorai
Heian period, 10th c. Chōgen-ji, Kyoto

The Eternal Flame of the Buddha's Teachings

The Konpon Chūdō is the heart of Enryaku-ji Temple. It began as a small hermitage built by Saichō and slowly grew into the hall we know today. The current building was rebuilt with support from the Tokugawa shogunate in 1642 following its destruction by Oda Nobunaga in 1571. The hall enshrines a Yakushi statue associated with Saichō as well as an "Inextinguishable Dharma Lamp." Both the Yakushi icon and the eternal flame are at eye-level with the visitor, a rare arrangement that expresses the idea that anyone can become a buddha.



National Treasure
Enryaku-ji Konpon Chūdō
(Inner Sanctuary)

Lanterns of the "Inextinguishable Dharma Lamp"

Just as this light continues to illuminate the world, I hope that the Buddha's enlightened teachings will continue to guide us.



Check out the re-creation of the hall's interior in Gallery 1F-2!

The lanterns on display in the gallery were actually used!