

Nara Prefecture

Thinking deeper about World Heritage

World Heritage Journal



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Nara Prefecture, Japan

Special Feature:

Connecting “the Buddhist Monuments in the Horyu-ji Area” to Next Generations

1. Interview with Furuya Shokaku, Chief Abbot of Horyu-ji Temple

In the third issue of the World Heritage Journal, we introduced buildings dating to various periods in the Horyu-ji Temple area that have been inscribed as World Heritage properties. However, it is not the case that these buildings have been left to stand idle for 1,400 years. Rather, they have been maintained through the efforts of countless people. In this issue, we interviewed the Chief Abbot of the Shotoku sect not only about these buildings, but also about how the teachings of Buddhism have been handed down over the generations, and how he would like to pass it on to the next generation.

(Interviewer: Takeuchi Masakazu, Executive Director of Culture, Education and Creative Living Department, Nara Prefectural Government)



Profile of Furuya Shokaku

- 1948: Born in Osaka
- 1957: Entered the Buddhist priesthood
- 1971: Graduated from the Faculty of Letters, Ryukoku University
- 1999: Became Archdeacon Priest of Horyu-ji Temple
- 2020: Became Chief Abbot of Horyu-ji Temple

think of ways to ask for cooperation through crowdfunding and other means.

In fact, many ancient temples were built with the full backing of the state. The Nihon Shoki (Chronicles of Japan) tells us that when Buddhism took root in Japan in 594 with the issuance of an imperial decree that made Buddhism flourish, emperors and powerful families built bussha, houses for the Buddha, to repay the kindness of their parents.

The main purpose of building temples was to transmit the teachings of the Buddha. The Buddha, sutras and priesthood—known as the Sanbo (three treasures of Buddhism)—represent the Buddha, his teachings, and the monks who spread his teachings. I believe that the basis of a temple is to build a bussha, which is the house of the Buddha, along with the seven major structures in a temple precinct where monks live collectively and spread the teachings of the Buddha.

Q : The buildings of Horyu-ji are World Heritage properties, but treasures such as Buddhist statues and the teachings of Buddhism, which have been handed down consistently throughout the ages, are also essential to the temple. It is very significant that the temple has maintained these treasures for more than 1,400 years through the efforts of many people involved. Are there any particular things that you pay attention to or are conscious of concerning the many temple buildings that have been handed down over the ages, and which are now inscribed as World Heritage properties?

Daily life at Horyu-ji

There are 13 monks at Horyu-ji, and all monks worship together on the 1st of each month at the Dai-Kodo (Great Lecture Hall) and the Kami-no-Mido, on the 8th at the Saien-do (Octagonal Hall), on the 15th at the Kon-do (Main Hall) and the Goju-no-To (Five-storied Pagoda), on the 18th at the Yumedono (Octagonal Hall) and the Denpo-do (Lecture Hall of To-in), and on the 22nd, which is the monthly death

A space for prayer

A : When a property is inscribed on the World Heritage List, the emphasis is placed on the purpose of the World Heritage program, which is to pass the property on in its current state to the next generations. As such, efforts are being made to repair the temple for preservation. However, as a World Heritage site, people tend to focus only on the buildings, but Horyu-ji is essentially a religious space, and as a temple, we also want to spread the teachings of Buddha.

Horyu-ji has no parishioners, so now that the number of worshippers has declined due to the COVID-19 pandemic and other factors, maintenance and management have become very difficult. We want people to know about the actual situation at Horyu-ji, and cannot just sit by without doing what we can to improve things. As such, we need to



Buddhist memorial service at the Kondo
(photo taken in 2004)



Onioi-shiki, performed during the Buddhist ceremony called 'Shuni-e' (photo taken in 2020)

anniversary of Prince Shotoku*¹, at the Syoryo-in and other locations. Various other memorial services are held throughout the year, including a Buddhist ceremony called 'Jion-e'*² on 13 November, the anniversary of the death of Jion Daishi, and a Buddhist ceremony called 'Shoman-e'*³ on 15 November, which is derived from the Shoman-gyo Sutra (Śrīmālādevī Siṃhanāda Sūtra), a Buddhist scripture annotated by Prince Shotoku.

Some of these ceremonies, such as Buddhist memorial services, have been practiced continuously since ancient times, while others have temporarily ceased or have been restored through the ages. Prior to the temple's inscription as a World Heritage property, we were not so aware of issues concerning Horyu-ji's conservation, but since inscription we have become even more careful than before not to damage the Buddhist statues and buildings.

For example, from 7 to 14 January of each year, a Buddhist ceremony called 'Shusho-e'*⁴ is held in the Kondo. During this service of repentance, there is a ceremony called 'Gongi no gi' In the original version of the ceremony, monks would run around the hall with a stick of lacquer tree and beat the pillars and other parts of the building with it. Nowadays, we set up special blocks that monks beat instead, thus preventing damage to the building.

Also, on 3 February every year, a Buddhist ceremony called 'Shuni-e'*⁵ is held in the Saiendo. During this Onioi-shiki, a ceremony for driving demons out, the demons perform a ritual on the foundation stones of the Saiendo and throw torches at the people around them, which is said to bring good health to those who get hit. In the old days, when people saw the torches coming, they would brace themselves and run away. However, a person with a camera poised to take a picture was hit in the face and injured by a flying torch as he tried to shield his camera from the torch. So, since then, a net has been stretched around the hall to prevent accidents. Nevertheless, since this is a religious event, we continue the traditional practice of throwing the torches. The reason for this is that the true significance of a temple building lies in the religious ceremonies that take place there.

Q : There are still repairs being made to buildings on the temple grounds. What do you feel about these activities to maintain the temple?

Temple buildings under constant repair

A : In the past, repairs were carried out by Horyu-ji temple carpenters, and then in modern times by the National Treasure Conservation Office as part of a national project. Following the completion of the last national repair project, on the Kondo (Main Hall), subsequent repairs came to be carried out by the Cultural Property Preservation Office of Nara Prefecture, which was established in 1961.

Repairs are still underway to replace the roof tiles of the To-in Raido, an Important Cultural Property. However, there are not many contractors with the skills to replace the roof tiles. In addition, the repairs sometimes require seismic reinforcement of the building, but it would be heart-breaking if the temple scenery was altered because the supporting members for the reinforcement were too visible. Therefore, we have to think of ways to make the reinforcing members inconspicuous. I am sure the people working on the site are going through a lot of hardships.

Q : In recent years, "community" has become a very important part of World Heritage sites. Communities include, for example, believers and the local area of Ikaruga. Do you feel that there has been any change in your relationship with the community so far?

People who support the temple

A : In terms of our relationship with local worshippers, we continue to maintain the customs of local worshippers offering the first rice harvested each year to Prince Shotoku. The twenty-second of each month is the monthly death anniversary of Prince Shotoku. A Taishi-ko (the religious meeting of worshipping Prince Shotoku) is held to present the first ears of rice, called 'Hatsuho', from Ikaruga on 22 December, and from Kashiba, Koriyama, Ando, Koryo, and other areas in Nara Prefecture on 22 January to Prince Shotoku.

Rice is offered to Prince Shotoku as a way of expressing gratitude to him for the rice that was produced thanks to his creation of reservoirs in the past. In Nara Prefecture, for example, the rice produced from Hatao Pond and Bungawa Pond in Kashiba has been offered to Horyu-ji since ancient times. Also, in the past, the first ears of wheat were offered in July when wheat was harvested, but since almost no one grows wheat anymore, the offering is made in a different form. In this way, the connection with local worshippers still exists today. Horyu-ji has not had parishioners from the outset, so we value the temple's relationship with local worshippers.

The Taishi-ko is the bedrock of Horyu-ji worshippers nationwide. The number of Taishi-ko is gradually decreasing, but Taishi-ko organized by stone masonry associations, carpenters, and commerce and industry associations still come to Horyu-ji every year and bring scrolls that are worshipped in local Taishi-ko, which are hung in a miniature shrine in Syoryo-in to be worshipped. I believe that this is a way for everyone to express their gratitude to Prince Shotoku for the past year.

However, what supports Horyu-ji today is tourism. There

have always been visitors to the temple, but I don't think there were as many as there are these days. Around 1960, I think, schools began to teach about Prince Shotoku and Horyu-ji, and many students began to visit the temple on school excursions and so on.

The year 1993, when Himeji-jo and Horyu-ji were inscribed on the World Heritage List, was a very lively year. As these were the first cultural properties in Japan to be inscribed on the World Heritage List, we held various events together with Himeji City, but actually we did not know much about World Heritage at the time (laughs). In terms of how we perceive things, we would like to hand down the buildings of Horyu-ji to the next generation regardless of whether or not they are inscribed as World Heritage.

It is of course meaningful that Horyu-ji was the first World Heritage in Japan. However, we hope to leave everything to the next generation, and that includes those properties that are not on the World Heritage List, because they are part of history, including aspects pertaining to Buddhist doctrine, and it would be a shame to see them disappear. The people who have protected and supported this temple for the past 1,400 years have been connected to it and have kept it alive throughout the ages. For our part, I believe that our mission is to continue to protect it and pass it on to the next generation, regardless of whether it is a World Heritage site or not.

Q : In this interview, we have talked about the themes of what has been preserved so far and what will be passed on to the next generation. Finally, is there anything you would like people to experience when they visit Horyu-ji in the future?

Seeing the lights

A : In order to preserve and pass on Horyu-ji, we still need to make as many people aware of Horyu-ji as possible. Crowdfunding and social networking are some of the ways to do this, but we aren't very tech-savvy (laughs).

This year marks the 1,400th anniversary of the death of Prince Shotoku, so Ikaruga Town and Nara Prefecture held various events for us. We also held an exhibition to promote a new awareness of Horyu-ji. We believe that the most important thing is to let as many people as possible know about Horyu-ji and come and experience our temple for themselves.

For sightseers, a visit to Horyu-ji is much more than just



1,400th anniversary of the death of Prince Shotoku (portable shrine)



1,400th anniversary of the death of Prince Shotoku (memorial service)

seeing the sights: it is about seeing the light. The light emanating from each place, whether from the Buddha or from the buildings, is the light of that place. I believe that when you experience something like this with your heart, then you can truly get a sense of what Buddhism is all about. It is also good for visitors to think again about Prince Shotoku and what kind of person Shakyamuni Buddha was. I believe that the most important thing is for people to visit the temple, see it with their own eyes, and experience what it has to offer. Even if you just visit Horyu-ji for sightseeing, we hope that our temple will resonate with you in some way and leave you with a lasting impression in your heart.

Teachings of Prince Shotoku that we want to convey now more than ever

I guess Prince Shotoku's teaching is all about the spirit of harmony. It means that everyone should get along and there should be no conflict. In Article 1 of the Seventeen-Article Constitution created by Prince Shotoku, he said, "When both sides engage in meaningful discussion rather than quarrelling, facts and truths will naturally come through." Some people have said that both the SDGs and the Seventeen-Article Constitution can be achieved through discussion if there is a "spirit of harmony," and I think that is exactly right.

Explanations

1) Prince Shotoku (574-622)

He was also called Prince Umayato and was a member of the imperial family. He assisted the emperor at that time, dispatched envoys to China, established the cap ranks system and the constitution, and laid the foundation for Japan.

2) Buddhist ceremony called 'Jion-e'

This memorial service is held on 13 November, the anniversary of the death of Jion Daishi, founder of the Hosso sect of Buddhism. The ceremony is held at Kohfuku-ji Temple and other temples of the Hosso sect, and at Horyu-ji Temple it is held in the Dai-Kodo (Great Lecture Hall). After two interruptions, it was reestablished for a third time in 1982.

3) Buddhist ceremony called 'Shoman-e'

One of the sutras that Prince Shotoku annotated is the Shoman-gyo Sutra (Śrīmāladevī Sīmhanāda Sūtra). The main image of Prince Shotoku, which represents him as he was when he lectured to Empress Suiko, is used in the ceremony to pray for the safety and security of the nation. The ceremony is held on 15 November.

4) Buddhist ceremony called Kondo 'Shusho-e'

A seven-day memorial service held annually from 8 to 14 January. It was first held in 768 for the purpose of praying for national peace, affluence for the people, and prosperity of the temple. In the Kichijo-Keka, the ceremony of confession to Kichijoten, the sins of the year are repented on behalf of the people, and the ceremony ends with the gongi no gi, the final secret ceremony.

5) Buddhist ceremony called 'Shuni-e'

The ceremony is held in the Saiendo (Octagonal Hall), meaning a memorial service to be practiced in February. First held in 1261, it involves a ceremony called Yakushi-Keka, which performed in front of the statue of Yakushi Nyorai, the principal image of the temple. After the expiration of the ceremony on 3 February, a ceremony to drive out demons (Onioi-shiki) is held, in which Bishamonten appears on the foundation stones of the Saiendo to drive away the demons who have a torch in their hands.

2. Connecting Architectural Monuments to the Next Generations

—The work of the Cultural Property Preservation Office of Nara Prefecture—

Nara Prefecture has 403 buildings designated as National Treasures or Important Cultural Properties, and 215 buildings designated as Prefectural Cultural Properties (as of April 2021). The Cultural Property Preservation Office of Nara Prefecture is responsible for the conservation and repair of these buildings. Currently, conservation and repair work is being carried out at Horyu-ji Temple, Kinpusen-ji Temple in Yoshino Town, Tamaki Shrine in Totsukawa Village, Kashihara Shrine in Kashihara City, and other locations in the prefecture.

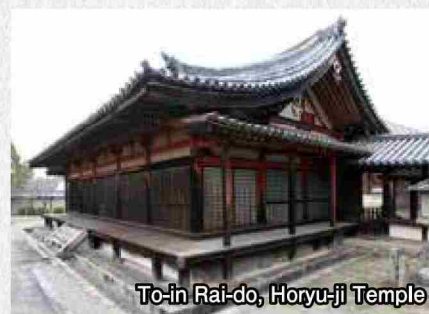
Since there are many architectural monuments in Nara Prefecture that have existed since the Asuka Period, the conservation and repair work is now carried out in accordance with the Law for the Preservation of Old Shrines and Temples and the Law for the Preservation of National Treasures, enacted after the end of the 19th century, with the recognition that ancient buildings in Nara Prefecture are cultural properties that must be protected.

The Cultural Property Preservation Office of Nara Prefecture was established in 1961 as a specialized agency in charge of the conservation and repair of architectural monuments. It is staffed by conservation architects and carpenters, but it is a significant feature of Nara Prefecture that these specialized engineers responsible for woodworking are prefectural employees.

Introducing the work of the Cultural Property Preservation Office of Nara Prefecture!

Repairs are currently underway at Horyu-ji Temple on the To-in Rai-do, an Important Cultural Property. This repair work includes the replacement of roof tiles, and repair and seismic reinforcement work based on the results of a detailed survey conducted when the roof was disassembled.

To-in Raido was built in 1231. The roof was covered with a total of approximately 16,000 tiles. This is the first time in 84 years that the roof has been retiled.



To-in Rai-do, Horyu-ji Temple

Roof tiles dismantling



Dismantling roof ridge tiles



Dismantling round roof tiles



Dismantling flat roof tiles

Damage surveys conducted before and after dismantling revealed that the tiles on the roof were not only from the previous repair in 1935, but also from medieval, modern, and even ancient times.

Roof repairs



Repairing roof tile ridge members



Doibuki roofing (using split cedar shingles)



To-in Rai-do after the completion of doibuki roofing

Damaged areas were also observed in the wooden members that support the base of the roof tiles, called sheathing roof boards (doibuki), and the roof tile ridge, so the members were repaired.

Seismic reinforcement



Interior before repair (with open latticed shutters)



Latticed wall for structural reinforcement

To-in Rai-do is characterized by its open structure, in which there are no walls between columns when the latticed shutters are opened. However, a seismic diagnosis revealed the necessary seismic resistance requirements. As a countermeasure, a temporary wall was installed as the highest priority to avoid damaging the building.

Work will then move on to roofing tiles. Old tiles that have passed inspection will be re-used on the building. The repair work is scheduled to be completed in 2023.

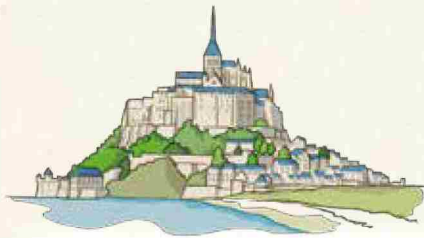
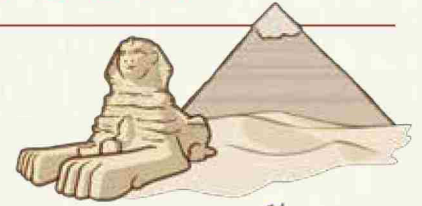
What are Criteria for the assessment of OUV? <Part 1>

The Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention stipulate that a property is recognized as having Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) when it meets one or more of ten criteria.

Of the ten criteria, criteria (i) to (vi) apply to cultural heritage and criteria (vii) to (x) apply to natural heritage. Mixed cultural and natural heritage properties are required

to meet at least one criteria from each.

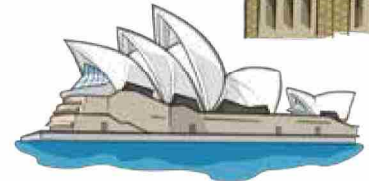
In this issue, we explain the first three of the six criteria applicable to cultural heritage.



critterion(i) represent a masterpiece of human creative genius

In a nutshell, properties meeting this criteria could be described as “masterpieces of humanity.”

This criterion was applied to many world-famous cultural heritage sites inscribed in the early days of the World Heritage system. Examples include Memphis and its Necropolis – the Pyramid Fields from Giza to Dahshur (Egypt, inscribed in 1979), Mont-Saint-Michel and its Bay (France, inscribed in 1979), Machu Picchu (Peru, inscribed in 1983), The Great Wall (China, inscribed in 1987), Statue of Liberty (USA, inscribed in 1984), and Sydney Opera House (Australia, inscribed in 2007).



Japan has received high praise for the artistry of its architectural styles, and this criterion was applied to the Buddhist Monuments in the Horyu-ji Area and Himeji-jo, which in 1993 became the first properties in Japan to be inscribed on the World Heritage List, as well as Shrines and Temples of Nikko (inscribed in 1999) among others.

critterion (ii) exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design

In a nutshell, properties meeting this criterion could be described as providing “a history of human interaction.” This criterion tends to be applied to geographic locations in which different cultures and civilizations come into contact with each other, and to properties related to trade. In recent years, emphasis has been placed not only on interactions within the same cultural sphere, but also on interactions with different cultures and civilizations.

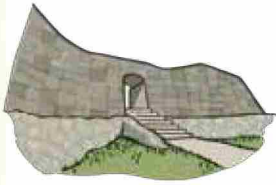
This criterion is often applied to World Heritage sites in Japan, a country that has nurtured its own unique culture through various exchanges with neighboring regions.

This criterion was also applied to all three World Heritage properties located in Nara Prefecture: Buddhist Monuments in the Horyu-ji Area (inscribed in 1993), Historic Monuments of Ancient Nara (inscribed in 1998), and Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range (inscribed in 2004).



criterion (iii) bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared

In a nutshell, properties meeting this criterion could be described as providing “evidence of a civilization or tradition.” This criterion is often applied to the culture of a civilization or nation that has ceased to exist, or to archaeological sites from prehistoric times.



Properties similar to Asuka-Fujiwara: Archaeological Sites of Japan’s Ancient Capitals and Related Properties, for which we are aiming at inscription on the World Heritage List, where archaeological sites provide evidence of the culture of an ancient nation that no longer exists, include Capital Cities and Tombs of the Ancient Koguryo Kingdom (China, inscribed in 2004) and Baekje Historic Areas (Korea, inscribed in 2015).

Japanese World Heritage properties falling under this criterion include Gusuku Sites and Related Properties of the Kingdom of Ryukyu (inscribed in 2000), Hidden Christian Sites in the Nagasaki Region (inscribed in 2018), and Mozu-Furuichi Kofun Group: Mounded Tombs of Ancient Japan (inscribed in 2019).

All illustrations in this section are provided by Study Style.

Part 4 Asuka-Fujiwara: Archaeological Sites of Japan’s Ancient Capitals and Related Properties



<http://www.asuka-fujiwara.jp>

Making “Asuka-Fujiwara” a World Heritage Site!

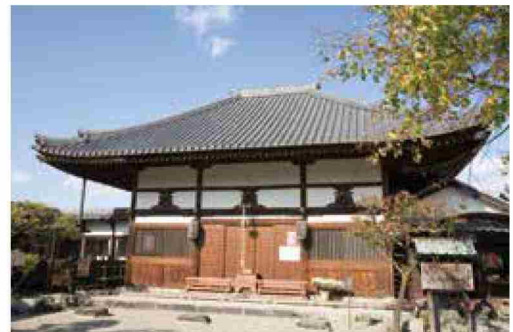
Nominated Properties (Part 2) Sites of Asuka’s Buddhist Temples

Asuka-dera Temple Site

Asuka-dera Temple was the first full-scale Buddhist temple in Japan, and was built as a clan temple of the Soga clan, the most powerful aristocratic family of the early Asuka period. It is recorded that the temple was completed in 596 under the guidance of engineers who came from the ancient Korean kingdom of Baekje. At the time of its construction, it was a magnificent temple in the style of the ancient Korean Koguryo Dynasty.

The foundation stones of the Chukon-do, located in front of the present Main Hall, which was built in 1826, and the foundation stones of the Kodo (Lecture Hall) in a village to the north of it, can be seen above ground, still in their original positions.

Furthermore, the Asuka Daibutsu, a seated statue of Shakyamuni Buddha, which was the principal image of the Chukon-do, still stands in its place, unmoved for more than 1,400 years since it was first built, although it has undergone repairs in later generations.



Current Main Hall and foundation stones of Chukon-do, Asuka-dera Temple Site

Tachibana-dera Temple Site (within the precincts of Tachibana-dera Temple)



Site of pagoda, Tachibana-dera Temple Site

Descriptions in the Nihon Shoki (Chronicles of Japan) and Manyo poetry clearly indicate that Tachibana-dera Temple was a nunnery. The date of its foundation is unknown, but excavations carried out on the temple site suggest that it was in the first half of the 7th century. The pagoda and the Kon-do (Main Hall) were arranged on a central axis in the Baekje style, and the foundation of the pagoda and the foundation stones can still be seen on the temple grounds.

Considering that the temple is said to be the birthplace of Prince Shotoku and the layout of the temple complex with the east side facing the Asuka Palace Site, it is presumed that the temple was closely associated with the Asuka Palace and the imperial family.

Today, the area where the central temple complex once stood is lined with various halls that were reconstructed in the 19th century.

Yamada-dera Temple Site

Construction of Yamada-dera Temple was initiated by Soga no Kurayamada Ishikawamaro as a clan temple, but records show that after the decline of the Soga clan, it received support from the imperial family and was completed in 685.

The construction of clan temples by influential families spread not only to Asuka but also to surrounding areas, indicating that Buddhism was flourishing in the middle of the Asuka period. The temple complex seems to have been so magnificent that Fujiwara no Michinaga, who visited the temple in 1023, praised the fact that its "decoration is uncommonly excellent."

Excavations in 1983 made headlines when the wooden structure of the original cloister, which had collapsed in the 11th century, was found in its original state. The excavated architectural components have been preserved, with part of the structure having been restored to what it would have looked like using actual components, and is on display at the Asuka Historical Museum, located near the temple site.



Panoramic view of Yamada-dera Temple Site

Kawara-dera Temple Site



Panoramic view of Kawara-dera Temple Site

Although the date and origin of Kawara-dera Temple are not known, it is assumed, based on descriptions in the Nihon Shoki (Chronicles of Japan) and other sources, that it was built by Emperor Tenji to mourn the loss of his mother, Empress Saimei, who died in 661.

Excavations have uncovered a large part of the central temple complex, revealing that it had a unique layout, with the pagoda and the Saikon-do standing side by side in front of the Chukon-do. The central axis of the temple runs in a north-south direction, but the fact that the Todai-mon (East Gate), in the direction of the Asuka Palace, is larger than the Nandai-mon (South Gate) suggests that Kawara-dera Temple was strongly associated with the Asuka Palace, which was located to the east.

Furthermore, artifacts excavated from the hill behind the temple have revealed that the walls of the hall were majestically decorated with senbutsu (tiles with Buddhist figures in relief) and many colorful earthenware statues were enshrined in the hall.

Hinokuma-dera Temple Site

Hinokuma-dera Temple was built as a clan temple by the Yamato no Ayauji clan, an immigrant clan to ancient Japan. Many Buddhist temples were built by various clans during the Asuka period (around the 7th century).

The date of its founding is unknown, but written records indicate that it existed in 686, and the temple buildings identified during excavations suggest that it was built in the latter half of the 7th century. The Ko-do (Lecture Hall) is built on a stacked-tile podium, which was similar to those used in Baekje, indicating that the temple was closely connected with the Korean peninsula in ancient times. The layout of the temple is also unique, and is not found anywhere else.

Omiashi Shrine was relocated to the temple site, which is now part of the shrine grounds, but a stone pagoda dating from around the 12th century still stands on top of the site of the former pagoda.



Stone pagoda, Hinokuma-dera Temple Site