The Amida Triad and Other Paintings

Gracing the interior of the Dining Hall is a 50-meter-long series of wall paintings by Toshio Tabuchi (1941–), a renowned Nihonga artist and professor emeritus at Tokyo University of the Arts. While the paintings by Hirayama Ikuo inside the Genjo Sanzoin complex present scenes from Genjo’s 17-year journey from China to India in search of sacred Buddhist scriptures, the paintings by Tabuchi (a student of Hirayama) look at the journey of Buddhism from China to Japan.

At the center of the series is the hall’s principal image, a depiction of the Amida Triad. Amida is the celestial Buddha who vows to appear with his attendant bodhisattvas at the time of death to anyone who calls on him with faith.

The series, which is entitled “Yakushiji and the Arrival of Buddhism,” starts in China and depicts Japanese monks, who have traveled there to study Buddhism, on board a boat taking them back to Japan. They eventually reach Fujiwarakyo, the ancient Japanese capital where Yakushiji was originally built: one of the paintings visualizes how the temple might have looked in those times. The final painting depicts Heijokyo, where the capital and temple were relocated around 1,300 years ago. There is also a painting showing the Giant Wild Goose Pagoda in Xi’an (formerly Chang’an), the starting point of Genjo’s 17-year journey and of Hirayama’s series of paintings inside the Genjo Sanzoin Complex.

The Dining Hall and paintings are only open to the public during special occasions.