

Sanmen Shusse Daikoku-do Hall

The hall stands at the place where Saicho encountered Daikokuten, one of the seven gods of good fortune, associated with good fortune and the kitchen. When Saicho first climbed Mount Hiei, he met a hermit and asked him who he was. The hermit answered by quoting the Lotus Sutra: “I remove the suffering of people and grant peace and the bliss of nirvana to this world.” Saicho then asked, “Then please protect the livelihood of the mountain and the health of the monks who practice here, and ensure there is enough food to feed them.” The hermit promised, “I will provide food for three thousand people daily, and grant good fortune and long life to those who worship me.” Saicho realized that the hermit must be Daikokuten, so he purified himself and carved an image of the Three-Headed Daikokuten with three heads and six arms. Later, Saicho’s disciple Kojo (779–858) enshrined a sculpture made by Saicho here, and it eventually became an administrative office and dining hall.

The central face of the Three-Headed Daikokuten is Daikokuten himself, provider and protector of food supplies. On the left is Bishamonten, giver of courage and strength. Benzaiten, who grants beauty and talent, is on the right. The six arms clutch various tools that remove suffering and grant good fortune. Many such statues are enshrined throughout Japan today, but this was the first Three-Headed Daikokuten statue.

S: Sanskrit

Sanmen Shusse Daikoku-do (Three-Headed Daikoku Hall of Success)

Daikokuten (S. Mahakala)

Bishamonten (S. Vaisravana)

Benzaiten (S. Sarasvati)