

## **Daikodo (Large Lecture Hall), Structure and History**

Learning has long been a central concern of the temples of the group known as the “Seven Great Temples of Nara.” Yakushiji is one of those temples, and for centuries the monks have assembled in the Large Lecture Hall (Daikodo) to study and debate aspects of Buddhism.

The Daikodo is larger than Yakushiji’s main hall of worship, the Kondo, and at 41 meters long, 20 meters deep and 17 meters high, is one of the biggest temple buildings in Nara. On the dais inside are some of Yakushiji’s most important statues, including the Miroku Triad. The function of this vast building was less for worship and more for nurturing knowledge of Buddhism in general and the Hosso Sect in particular. While the present building is comparatively new, having been built in 2003, its scale reflects the continuing importance Yakushiji places on learning.

Centuries ago, the hall housed a 9- by 6.5-meter tapestry called *Amida Jodo henso-zu*, a visualization of the Pure Land that was commissioned by Empress Jito (645–703) for the repose of the soul of her husband, Emperor Tenmu, who had originally conceived of building Yakushiji. The Jodo mandala, along with the entire lecture hall, was destroyed by fire in 1528. This intricately woven mandala, depicts the scene when, according to the sutras, Amida, the Buddha of infinite light and life, comes to transport the deceased to the Pure Land (Jodo), or paradise.