

Daikodo, a Center of Learning

Inside the Daikodo are two pulpits serving as lecterns, where monks come face to face in discussions and debate, their voices amplified by the high ceilings of the hall. The Hosso school has a long history of emphasizing learning over other Buddhist practices such as meditation, making the Daikodo an intrinsic and important part of Yakushiji.

Among topics debated were the teachings of the Yogachara school of philosophy and psychology that flourished in early Indian Mahayana Buddhism. Yogachara was introduced to Japan in 654 by Dosho, a Japanese monk who had studied in China under the Yogachara master Xuanzang, who in turn had studied in India. In Japan, the East Asian “Consciousness-Only” school of Yogachara is known as “Hosso,” and its doctrine that all phenomena are ultimately phenomena of the mind plays a pivotal role in Hosso school teachings. Each April a re-enactment of these debates as they would have been conducted in the Nara period takes place during a Buddhist service known as *Saisho-e*.

The Daikodo is also the venue of an examination taken each November by Yakushiji’s clergy, who must learn by rote some two hours of doctrinal discussion, which they study over a 21-day period.

Also displayed in the hall are statues of the Ten Great Disciples of Shakyamuni Buddha made by sculptor Nakamura Shin’ya (b. 1926). These 10 attained enlightenment, and the sculptures represent the difficulties of becoming enlightened while also showing that, with effort and endurance, even ordinary people can achieve it.