

Statue of the Healing Buddha

To the left of Rushana Buddha is a statue of Yakushi, the Buddha of Healing. This image is thought to have been made a little later than the other two in the triad and when the statue underwent restoration in 1972, three coins found in the palm of the left hand added support to the theory that it was completed at the beginning of the Heian period (794–1185).

With its downcast eyes, the 3.36-meter-high image exudes an aura of compassion and sincerity befitting a Buddha of healing, especially for the infirm who have long come to pay homage to him. The Buddha of Healing is referred to in the Yakushi Sutra as the perfect Buddha, who is both wise and committed to blessing all those on the path to Buddhahood. Another of Yakushi's vows is to help "all ill and helpless sentient beings to achieve recovery, to be blessed with peace and joy of body and mind, to become wealthy, and to obtain the state of enlightenment by hearing his name."

Interestingly, the Healing Sutra goes unmentioned in the earliest chronicles of Japan until 686, when Emperor Tenmu (631–686), fell ill. An entry for that year in the *Nihon Shoki*, a chronicle that was completed in 720, tells how the emperor had enlisted the help of priests to explain the sutra, and although he never recovered, interest in the mysterious power of the Buddha of Healing had begun to take root.