

Image of Yakushi Nyorai

When Tōji was founded, its main image of worship was of Yakushi Nyorai, the Buddha of healing and medicine. Devotion to Yakushi was among the first to spread in Japan after the introduction of Buddhism from the Asian mainland in the sixth century. As a Buddha of healing, Yakushi Nyorai offers not only salvation in the next world but relief from pain and suffering in this one.

This image of Yakushi was created in 1603 by the master sculptor Kōshō (1534–1621) and is based on older iconography. It was commissioned when the hall was rebuilt after the fire of 1486. The statue is carved from Japanese cypress and covered in lacquer and gold leaf. Surrounding Yakushi's head like a halo are the Seven Buddhas of Medicine, said to be aspects of his divinity. Around the base of the statue stand the Twelve Heavenly Generals, a group of fierce celestial beings that serve as his protectors. Yakushi is flanked by two attendants, bodhisattvas representing sunlight and moonlight.