

**Lecture Hall (Kōdō)**

The Lecture Hall is the center of religious instruction at Tōji and houses one of the temple's most important treasures: a three-dimensional depiction of Buddhist cosmology that consists of 21 statues, most of which date from the ninth century.

When the monk Kūkai (774–835) became abbot in 824, he built this hall as a place to teach the esoteric Buddhist tradition he had studied in China. This tradition, which has its roots in Indian Buddhism, emphasizes hidden knowledge and rituals, the chanting of mantras, and the study of mandalas—visual representations of the Buddhist universe. The statues in the hall are arranged as a large, three-dimensional mandala.

Kūkai's original hall was lost during the fire in 1486 that destroyed most of Tōji's buildings. Rebuilt in 1491, five years after the fire, the building still stands on the foundation stones of the original hall. Fifteen of the 21 wooden images survived and, along with one other that was remade later, have been designated National Treasures.