

## Reihō-kan Treasure Chamber

The Reihō-kan is a museum that is located on the premises of Shimo-Daigo. It opened its doors in 1935 to house the grand temple treasury, including more than 70,000 National Treasures. Its magnificent content have travelled the world in key exhibitions and embody the essence of Japanese sacral art and culture. Two special seasonal exhibitions in spring and autumn, curated by the own team of specialists with guest curators from renowned museums, make a repeated visit worthwhile.

A gilded wooden triad of the seated Yakushi Nyorai, the Buddha of Medicine and Healing, forms the center of the permanent exhibition as the biggest of the National Treasures of the temple. Nikkō and Gekkō, sibling Bodhisattvas of sunlight and moonlight respectively, stand to either side of the main image. Devotion to the Yakushi Nyorai, which promised relief from physical illnesses and other ailments of life, began flourishing soon after the introduction of Buddhism to Japan in the first millennium. The main statue is one of the oldest sculptural masterpieces of Kyoto, dating from 913, and representative of the calm sculptural style of the mid-Heian period, visually recreating the omnipresent benevolence of the Medicine Buddha. The delicate flow of his garment creates a dynamic visual contrast to his strong physical presence. It was carried down from the original hall on the summit using only manpower to avoid arid climate and can now be viewed all year round.

Further important sculptures on permanent display are the Godai Myō-ō or Five Great Wisdom Kings. These statues were equally transferred to Reihō-kan from the Godai-dō on the Kami-Daigo precinct. These divinities - often depicted with multiple arms holding

attributes of weapons or animals - embody the wisdom and mercy of the Buddhas in a wrathful manifestation to subdue evil desires. The life-sized statues made of hollowed out cypress wood demonstrate stylistic features of the early Heian period, yet the more stylized garments suggest a date in the 11th century. Despite showing intense movements, the proportions remain harmonious and achieve a dynamic flow. The group of Important Cultural Properties are renowned for their individual expression due to their slender limbs. Shingon Buddhism considers the Wisdom Kings to be the third most important category of deities in the pantheon, after the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas.

Each Wisdom King represents a virtue, a benefit, and a cardinal direction. The central figure is Fudo Myō-ō, the “Immovable One,” who is shown seated and holding a noose and a sword, with Gundari Myō-ō (south), Daiitoku Myō-ō (west), Kongōyasha Myō-ō (north), and Gozanze Myō-ō (east) surrounding him. The statue of Daiitoku dates to the Heian period while the others date from the beginning of the Edo period (1603–1867).