

Akikusa no ma and Chokushi no ma (Important Cultural Property)

The Akikusa no ma (Room of Autumn Grasses) and the Chokushi no ma (Room of the Imperial Envoy) are the second and third of the three reception rooms near the entrance of the Sanbō-in. In a manner that is typical of this traditional architectural style, the rooms decrease in size as the level of the floor, and with it the status, of each room rises.

The second room Akikusa no ma, 15 *tatami* mats in size, takes its name from the seven flowering grasses of autumn, which has long been a theme of Japanese painting and poetry. The Chokushi no ma is furthest from the entrance, smallest in size (10 *tatami* mats), and highest in status (and floor height). Both rooms have been adorned with painted sliding doors by the artists from the school of Hasegawa Tōhaku. The Chokushi no ma is decorated with depictions of bamboos and flowers, representing spring in contrast to the autumn grass, one of the central traditional motives of Japan. The serene glow of the bamboo forest in the painting was elaborately decorated with silver pigments, which unfortunately have oxidized to black, but still demonstrating a sophisticated design of the interior to welcome the imperial envoys.