

Hon-dō (Important Cultural Property)

The Hon-dō, also called Miroku-do, is a hall dominated by one of the most impressive and realistic statue of Miroku Bosatsu, the Bodhisattva Maitreya, an Important Cultural Property which was carved in 1192 by one of the most distinguished Buddhist carvers in Japanese art history, Kaikei (active late 12th - early 13th century). His sculptures, which are characterized by graceful design and perfect proportions, initiated the emphasis on realism within the sacred art of Japan during the Kamakura period. The 112 cm tall statue is a fine example of Kaikei's work and entirely gilded. He is flanked by a wooden statue of Shōbō dating to 1665 to the left, and a wooden statue of Kūkai to the right, dating to 1667.

Behind the hall of Hon-dō is the Goma-dō Hall, a venue for the *goma* fire ritual. The ritual with ancient Indian roots is equally present in the Shingon Buddhism as well as in the mountain asceticism of Shugen-dō. Devotees believe that temptations, the roots of suffering in life, are purged by fire.