

## **Miei-dō Hall**

The Miei-dō Hall, Eikandō's largest building, is a shrine to the founders of the Pure Land school of Buddhism, and memorial services are performed here each year in April. The centermost altar enshrines a statue of Hōnen (1133–1212), who established Pure Land Buddhism in Japan. The altar on the left holds a statue of Shōkū (1177–1247), one of Hōnen's primary disciples and the founder of the Seizan branches of Pure Land Buddhism, and the altar on the right has a statue of Shandao (613–681), an eminent Chinese scholar of Pure Land Buddhism whose writings were studied extensively by Hōnen and Shōkū.

Also enshrined in the Miei-dō Hall is a statue of Binzuru (Sanskrit: Pindola Bharadvaja), the first of the 16 arhats, who flaunted his supernatural abilities and was admonished by Shakyamuni, the historical Buddha. Before attaining true enlightenment, Binzuru was tasked with remaining on earth to continue to spread Buddhist teaching. It is believed that rubbing his body will cure sickness or disease, and the statue's head is smooth and shiny from decades of being rubbed by visiting pilgrims.

The centermost altar (*shumidan*) itself is a representation of Mt. Shumi, the centermost point of the world within Buddhist cosmology and the realm of the Four Heavenly Kings (Shitennō) who guard the four directions and are represented by statues in the corners of the hall. It is also said that the 48 pillars that support the roof represent Amida Buddha's 48 bodhisattva vows, including the Fundamental Vow (Hongwan) to save all those who believe in him.

Eikandō's Miei-dō Hall has been rebuilt several times. After being burned down during the Ōnin War (1467–1477), it was rebuilt in 1497 by Emperor Go-Tsuchimikado (1442–1500) and rebuilt again in 1600 and 1912. The hall is constructed of zelkova wood in an eclectic blend of Zen and traditional Japanese styles.