

Jikidō (Refectory)

Linking the Daikōdō (Great Lecture Hall) with the Jōgyōdō (Circumambulatory Hall), the Jikidō (Refectory) forms the west axis of the Three Halls (Mitsu no Dō) of Engyōji. Historically, the Jikidō was a residential space where monks studied, slept, and took their meals.

Construction of the first building to occupy this site began in 1174 at the request of Retired Emperor Goshirakawa (1127–1192). Natural disasters destroyed that first hall, and the one that replaced it. Work on the building we see today began in the mid-fifteenth century, but it was delayed by the sheer scale and complexity of what would be the largest two-story hall of its kind in Japan. Ultimately, the Jikidō remained unfinished for nearly five centuries. Its second story was completed in 1963 as part of a major renovation project. Interestingly, the long passage of time between its conception and completion led to some errors in construction. For example, the southeast corner of the hall's roof juts against the roof of the Jōgyōdō in a way that is clearly visible from the second-floor balcony.

Today, the first floor of the Jikidō is used primarily as a space where visitors can practice the merit-accruing act of copying sutras. On the second floor, numerous religious and cultural artifacts that shed light on the rich history of Engyōji are on display. Among them is a fourteenth-century statue of Kongō Satta (Sanskrit: Vajrasattva), a bodhisattva who symbolizes an unshakable aspiration for enlightenment.

The Jikidō is an Important Cultural Property. The Kongō Satta statue is a Cultural Property of Hyogo Prefecture.