

Juhoji Temple: Statue of the Thousand-Armed Kannon

This statue of the Thousand-Armed Kannon Bodhisattva was made in the latter half of the Heian period (794–1185) from one single piece of wood. Kannon Bodhisattva, the avatar of mercy, is the deity venerated at Juhoji Temple. This is one of only three Thousand-Armed Kannon statues in all of Japan that actually have one thousand hands. In addition to the main three pairs of hands, twenty hands are carved on both sides of its body holding various items such as moons, suns, swords, arrows, mirrors, clouds, and bones, embedded in an array of additional hands. There was once an eye etched onto each hand. It was believed that Kannon has many eyes to discover suffering and many hands to relieve it. At 180 cm tall, Juhoji Temple's Kannon statue has a significant presence. Because of the ink framing its eyes, eyebrows, chin, and mouth, its expression appears to change, from soft to stern, feminine to masculine, in different lights.