

## Joruriji Temple: *Hondo* (Main Hall)

The current Main Hall of Joruriji Temple is a National Treasure of Japan. Completed in 1107 and moved to its present location in 1157, it is a well-preserved example of Buddhist architecture from the Heian period (794–1185). It is also appropriately situated on the west shore of the temple's central pond, to represent its connection to the Amida Nyorai, the Lord of the Western Paradise, enshrined within.

There are nine wooden consecrated statues of the Buddha Amida (Amida Nyorai) enshrined in the Main Hall, lined up behind the hall's nine sliding doors. Amida Nyorai is called the Lord of the Western Paradise. This deity is often called upon to lead the souls of the dead to the world beyond this one. According to historical records, during the twelfth century, many temples with groups of nine Amida Nyorai were built at the request of the imperial family or court nobles. However, Joruriji Temple is believed to be the only remaining example of those temples. The line of nine statues represents nine manifestations of Amida Nyorai corresponding to the nine patterns of human rebirth.

It is believed that the central Amida Nyorai within the Main Hall, the largest, was the first to be created and was carved in the late eleventh century. The other eight would then have followed shortly after in the early twelfth century. The statues show various differences in expression, as well as variety in the motifs on the halos behind their heads. These statues were built using *yosegizukuri*, or joined woodblock technique, and they are hollow on the inside. When the largest statue underwent restoration work, woodblock prints of Amida Nyorai were discovered inside the Amida statue, thought to have been there since the statue's creation.