

Northern Round Hall
Statue of the Buddha Maitreya
National Treasure

This intricately executed statue depicts Maitreya (Jp. Miroku), the Buddha of the Future. The image was carved from wood during the Kamakura period (1185–1333) and is remarkably well preserved. Backed by a radiant golden mandorla, the figure is adorned with elaborate robes and jewelry, including a wheel-shaped pendant symbolizing the Buddhist wheel of dharma, which represents Buddha's teachings.

According to Buddhist tradition, Maitreya is the immediate successor of the historical Buddha Shakyamuni, and will be born in this world in 5.67 billion years to become its next Buddha. In this image, Maitreya wears an expression of meditative tranquility and sits in the semi-lotus position, one foot on the ground. This indicates a being not yet an awakened Buddha lingering in this world to save all sentient beings. The right hand is raised in the blessing and wish-fulfilling (*yogan-in*) gesture.

The chest (*zushi*) enshrining the statue protected it from light, pests, and other damage over the centuries. The interior is elaborately decorated and features celestial musicians (*apsara*) near the top of the chest. The doors are decorated with paintings of Hosso school patriarchs, the bodhisattva Monju, the sage Yuima Koji, and the Four Heavenly Kings, the latter the guardians of Buddhism.