

Southern Round Hall
Statue of Fukukensaku Kannon
National Treasure

Fukukensaku Kannon is one of the “transformation forms” manifested by the bodhisattva Kannon, often described as the Buddhist deity of mercy. The name of this deity derives from the snare, or weighted rope, that held in one of eight hands. The snare is used to rescue sentient beings, protect them from harm, and fulfill their wishes and desires.

Dated to 1189, this sculpture made by the assembled wood block technique is the principal image of the Southern Round Hall. Fukukensaku Kannon is portrayed with four pairs of hands. The first pair is joined together in front of the chest. The left hand of the second pair holds a lotus, while the right grasps a monk’s staff. The hands of the third pair are extended outward to the sides of the hips with the palms facing up, while the left hand of the fourth and final pair holds a snare, and the right a fly whisk.

The hair is piled into a tall topknot covered by a crown containing a small standing image of the Buddha Amida. The forehead features a third, vertical eye. The upper body of the image is covered with deerskin draped diagonally over the left shoulder.

The Buddhist sculptor Kokei (c. 977–1049) and his disciples created this sculpture over a 15-month period. Its massive body and dignified facial expression indicate the sculptors consciously imitated the sculptural styles of the Nara (710–794) and early Heian (794–1185) periods.