

Northern Round Hall
Statue of the Buddha Maitreya
National Treasure

This statue depicts Maitreya (Jp. Miroku), the Buddha of the Future. It is the principal image of the Northern Round Hall, and is attributed to the renowned sculptor Unkei (1150–1223). It is carved of cypress wood joined by the *yosegi-zukuri* technique of sculpting and dated to around 1212. According to Buddhist tradition, Maitreya is the immediate successor of Shakyamuni, the historical Buddha, and will descend to this world in 5.67 billion years to become its next Buddha. Here he is depicted as a fully awakened Buddha, foreshadowing his future appearance in this world.

Documents inserted into the body of the image upon its completion include some bearing the date 1212. The names of a number of sculptors of the Kei School, such as Genkei, Jokei, Unka, Unjo, Unkaku, Tankei, Koben, Koun, and Kosho, were recorded in ink on the inside of the pedestal. Taken together, this evidence suggests that the image was executed by a team of sculptors led by Genkei under the overall supervision of Unkei, who is considered to have conceived the image.