

**Northern Round Hall**  
**Statues of the Monks Mujaku and Seshin**  
**National Treasures**

Mujaku (Asanga) and Seshin (Vasubandhu) were a pair of famous scholar-monks who lived in northwest India during the fourth and fifth centuries and traditionally said to have been brothers. These sculptures are attributed to Unkei (1150–1223) and dated to around 1212. They flank a statue of Maitreya, the Buddha of the Future, who is said to have appeared in a dream to Mujaku. Mujaku wrote down Maitreya's teachings and gave them to Seshin. Followers of the Hosso School, of which Kofukuji is the head temple, venerate the pair as two of its founding patriarchs.

In sculpting these very lifelike figures, carved by the assembled woodblock-construction technique, Unkei attempted to express an ideal of the Buddhist practitioner in a manner that transcends ethnicity or historical context. Though they are a pair, their expressions are very different. The aged and slightly gaunt Mujaku gently gazes down upon living beings while clutching a cloth-wrapped parcel to his chest. His younger brother Seshin is depicted as a middle-aged man who gazes into the distance with determination. The massive bodies of both images convey a sense of imposing dignity and assurance, while the crystal eyes bring their faces alive. For these reasons, they are considered not only representative of Unkei's oeuvre, but two of the greatest works of Japanese sculpture.