

## **Statue of Amida Nyorai**

This seated statue of Amida, Buddha of the Western Pure Land, was created in 888 to serve as the principal object of worship at Ninnaji. The image projects a serene presence with downcast eyes and smooth wooden curves. Amida is believed to grant rebirth in the Western Pure Land, or paradise, free from the endless cycle of death and rebirth. This statue is identifiable as Amida from its hand position, with the thumb and forefingers of each hand pressed together to form a circle. In seated statues, the hands are held in the lap, in front of the belly, a position of meditation that is seen almost exclusively in statues of Amida.

Carved from a single block of wood, the image is celebrated as the starting point of a Japanese sculpting style that continued to evolve during the Heian period (794–1185). The statue has secular significance as well: it is an important example of the beginnings of the Japanization of Buddhist statuary. When Buddhism was brought to Japan via China in the sixth century, sculpting techniques from continental Asia were also introduced. One example is the hollow-core dry-lacquer method of crafting statues that thrived here during the Nara period (710–794). It was some time before the statues began to depart from their continental precedents and take on a style of their own.