

## **Worshipping Bodhisattvas on Clouds** (*Unchu kuyo bosatsu*)

Fifty-two bodhisattvas carved out of cypress wood adorn the walls of the hall, floating all around the image of Amida (Sk. Amitabha) Buddha.

Bodhisattvas are beings that have reached enlightenment, but who choose to postpone their ascent to Buddhahood in order to assist others to achieve enlightenment. In Pure Land (Jodo) Buddhism, they accompany Amida in guiding the souls of devotees to the Pure Land. There may once have been more than the 52 bodhisattvas in the Amida Hall. Twenty-six of the original statues and 26 replicas now decorate the Amida Hall. The other 26 originals are on display in the temple museum.

Each bodhisattva is unique. Twenty-eight of the 52 play musical instruments such as flutes and cymbals, while others are depicted with Buddhist accoutrements, such as with a heavenly canopy or seated on a lotus pedestal. Yet others perform dances or put their hands together in prayer. All the statues convey a sense of constant movement as wispy clouds and fluttering scarves trail behind them.

Artisans led by the master sculptor Jocho (d. 1057) carved, painted, lacquered, and applied gold leaf to these sacred figures. The colors of the bronze haloes, which were added later, have long since faded. A full-color replica of one of the bodhisattvas is in the temple museum, showing how the originals might have appeared nearly a millennium ago.