

Saidaiji Temple

Statue of Eleven-Headed Kannon

Important Cultural Property

This statue represents Kannon, also known as the bodhisattva of mercy. Kannon is believed to protect people from illness and help them secure food and wealth. The eleven heads set atop the statue's main head have a range of expressions, but the largest radiates compassion and tranquility. There are several interpretations of why there are eleven heads, including the belief that the lower ten represent the stages on the path to enlightenment, while the uppermost represents buddhahood.

This Kannon statue was modeled after the Kannon of Hasedera Temple in Nara Prefecture. It was commissioned by the Retired Emperor Gotoba (1180–1239) and made in 1145 in the latter part of the Heian period (794–1185), and in 1289 it was brought to Saidaiji from Kyoto on the order of Emperor Kameyama (1249–1305). It has been housed in the Shio-Do since 1674.