

Statue of Eleven-Headed Kannon

National Treasure

Surrounded by a resplendent halo of detailed floral embellishments, this statue of the bodhisattva Kannon is an exquisite example of religious craftsmanship from the ninth century. It stands 196.2 centimeters tall and was carved from a single block of Japanese nutmeg wood. The elaborate pedestal representing a multi-tiered lotus flower is also believed to have been made during the Heian period (794–1185), but was added after the statue was finished.

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. The statue is housed in the Treasure Hall from March 2020.

To the right, in the center of the back row of larger statues, is the main object of worship in the Kondo Hall, the Shakyamuni Buddha.