

Kairyuoji Temple

Statue of Eleven-Headed Kannon

Important Cultural Property

This statue of Kannon, also known as the bodhisattva of mercy, is the principal object of worship at Kairyuoji Temple. 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 statue was created in the Kamakura period (1185–1333) and was based on an Eleven-Headed Kannon statue commissioned by Empress Komyo (701–760). She was an ardent Buddhist who founded Hokeji and supported major temples such as Todaiji and Kofukuji.