

Sho Kannon Bodhisattva (Skt: Aryâvalokitesvara)

Kannon, the goddess of mercy, appears to all who call for her compassion. There are many manifestations of Kannon, and Sho Kannon is the primary form. As is typical for Sho Kannon, the left hand holds a partially opened lotus bud. The sepals around the bud represent the desires and anxieties of sentient beings and the flower beneath, primed to break through and bloom, is a metaphor for purity of spirit. The gesture of the right hand alludes to the opening of the lotus bud.

The statue is 321 centimeters high and was carved from camphor. The sculpture's smooth finish and peaceful demeanor are typical of the late-Heian period (794–1185). Historical records indicate that this statue was made sometime after 1064 when a fire destroyed much of Kanzeonji Temple. The style and joined-block construction of the sculpture support the conclusion.