

Inside the Amida Hall

The highly ornamental inner sanctum of the Amida Hall symbolizes the Pure Land. On the central altar stands the likeness of Amida, whose radiant wisdom is represented by the gilded surfaces all around the statue. On the back wall to the left of the altar hang paintings portraying the seven patriarchs of Jodo Shinshu. These priests were quoted by Jodo Shinshu founder Shinran (1173–1262) in his writings and are venerated for their contributions to the Pure Land tradition. Shown to the right of the altar is Prince Shotoku, the sixth-century regent who was revered by Shinran for his role in spreading Buddhism in Japan.

Above the doors to the inner sanctum runs a gilded *ranma* transom decorated with carvings of peacocks and other birds that convey teachings about the path to enlightenment as depicted in the Amida Sutra, one of the key texts in Jodo Shinshu. The same motif appears in the paintings that adorn the sliding doors on both ends of the back wall. Particularly notable is the artwork to the far left, “Cherry and Peacock” by Kishi Chikudo (1826–1897), a master of animal paintings who participated in the decoration of the Kyoto Imperial Palace when it was rebuilt in its present form in 1855.