

## CONSERVATION OF THE SEATED AMIDA NYORAI AT SAIDAIJI, NARA

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According to temple tradition, the life-sized (82.3cm.) figure of a seated wooden Amida nyorai (Sk. Amitābha tathāgata) in the possession of Saidaiji temple in Nara served as the central worship object of the temple's pagoda. It has been exhibited since it was entrusted to the Nara National Museum in 1961 and commentary and photographs have been published. The statue, whose hands form the manual sign (Sk. *mudra*) known as *seppō-in* in Japanese, is known among scholars as one of the revivalist works of the Kamakura period. The condition of the statue, however, had been poor. The gold foil on the statue's surface had flaked and the joints have grown loose and ill-fitting, a portion of the wood had been lost, and the unsuitable supplementary wood backing has caused several problems for conservation.

For these reasons, with financial support of the Sumitomo Foundation, the Saidaiji temple, the headquarters of the Shingon-Ritsu sect, and the Bijutsu-in as leading contributors, the conservation was conducted at the Conservation Center of the Nara National Museum. The original appearance of the statue was restored. We are making public the process of the repairs with photographs and drawings (presented by the Bijutsu-in) here for future study. The major task of the conservation was the disassembling and reassembling of the joints, and supplementing and adjusting loss and inappropriate portions, filling and strengthening the places where the foil had come loose. As a result of disassembling the statue, it was learned that material used for the base of the trunk which had been thought to be camphor (*kusunoki*) was probably Japanese Judas-tree (*katsura*), and it has now been suggested that the portions of the statue that were fashioned, unlike the trunk, from Japanese ground-cypress (*hinoki*), such as the left side, the two legs, and the forearms, which had been thought to be later repairs, were the originals.