

Hirsch Library Research Guide



Amida 92.193

Artist/Culture: Koei (Unkei IX), Japanese

Date/Period: 1472 (Muromachi Period)

Place: Shikoku Island, Japan

Medium: Wood with traces of polychrome

Dimensions: 53.3 x 45.1 x 41 cm

This temple sculpture was created by Koei Unkei, a master of the Muromachi period. Koei depicts Amida, the Amitabha Buddha, with tightly curled hair and loose flowing robes. The gleaming white stone on the figure's forehead represents the universal brightness that emanates from the Buddha's enlightened state. Amida is the Japanese name of the Amitabha Buddha, who rules over the Paradise of the West, believed to be a heavenly place where the souls of Buddhists who have transcended the cycle of death and rebirth reside. Amida is the central figure of Jodo, or Pure Land Buddhism, a movement that became popular in Japan during the 12th century. Pure Land Buddhists believe that through faith and repeatedly reciting Amida's name, anyone can escape earthly suffering.

Online Resources:

[Hirsch Library Online Catalog](#)

[MET Museum of Art Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History](#)

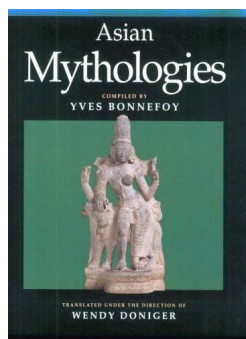
Articles: (full-text access available on-site; off-site access available through your school library or HPL System)

The Editors of *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. "Muromachi Period". *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 2018.

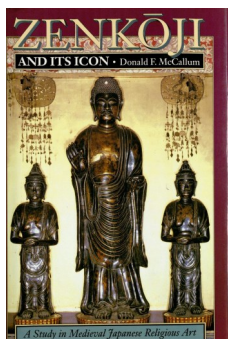
The Editors of *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. "Pure Land Buddhism". *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 2017.

Takeda, Ryusei. "The Pure Land Buddhist Notion of Faith." *Buddhist—Christian Studies* 14 (1994):43-53.

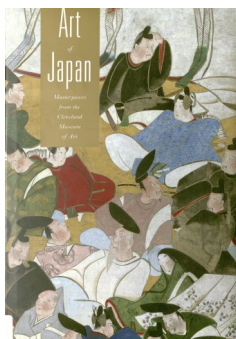
Print Resources:



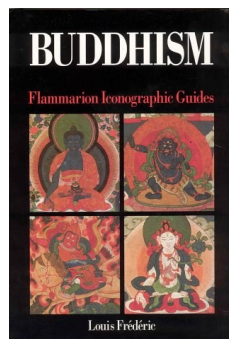
[Asian Mythologies](#)



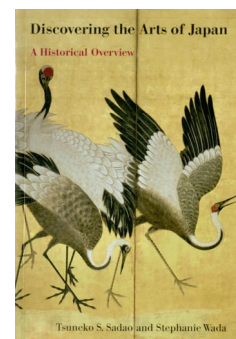
[Zenkoji and its Icon: A Study in Medieval Japanese Religious Art](#)



[Art of Japan: Masterpieces from the Cleveland Museum](#)



[Buddhism: Flammarion Iconographic Guides](#)



[Discovering the Arts of Japan: A Historical Overview](#)

Bibliography

Object Specific Information

[Landay, Janet. *Museum of Fine Arts, Houston Visitor Guide*. London: Scala Publishers Ltd, 2000](#)

N 576 .H7 A85 Ready Ref.

[Levenson, Jay. *Circa 1492: Art in the Age of Exploration*. Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1991](#)

CB 367 .C57 1991

[Pal, Pratapaditya. *Light of Asia: Buddha Sakyamuni in Asian Art*. Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1984](#)

N 8193.2 .A3 c44 1984

General Surveys of Japanese Art

[Gardner, Helen, Fred S. Kleiner and Christin J. Mamiya. *Gardner's Art through the Ages*. Belmont: Thomson/Wadsworth, 2005. See esp. chsaps. 8 & 27 "Shrines, Statues, and Scrolls: The Art of Early Japan" & "From the Shoguns to the Present: The Art of Later Japan"](#)

N 5300 .G25 2005

[Stanley-Baker, Joan. *Japanese Art*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2014](#)

N 7350 .S7 2014 Reserve

[Honour, Hugh, and John Fleming. *The Visual Arts: A History*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1999. See esp. chap. 6 "Buddhism, Hinduism, and Far Eastern Art."](#)

N 5300 .H68 1999

Buddhism

[Buswell, Robert E. *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014](#)

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[Jansen, Eva Rudy. *The Book of Buddhas: Ritual Symbolism used on Buddhist Statuary and Ritual Objects*. Diever: Binkey Kok Publications, 1990](#)

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General Japanese References

[Addiss, Stephen and Audrey Yoshiko Seo. *How to Look at Japanese Art*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996.](#)

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DS 821 .C62 1988 Ref

[Meyer, Milton Walter. *Japan: A Concise History*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Pub., 1993.](#)

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[Reischauer, Edwin O. \(Edwin Oldfather\), Ichiro Kato, and Kodansha. *Japan: An Illustrated Encyclopedia*. Tokyo: Kodansha, 1993.](#)

DS 805 .J263 1993 Ref

Pure Land Buddhism and Amida/Amitabha

[Davis, Richard H. *Images, Miracles, and Authority in Asian Religious Traditions*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1998.](#)

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[Sano, Emily J., Randall Laird, Alison J. Miller, Erin K. Murphey, and Katherine Crawford Luber. *Heaven and Hell: Salvation and Retribution in Pure Land Buddhism*. San Antonio: San Antonio Museum of Art, 2017.](#)

N 8193.3 .P8 H43 2017

[Jordan, Michael. *Encyclopedia of the Gods: Over 2,500 Deities of the World*. New York: Facts of File, 1993.](#)

BL 473 .J67 1993

This reference guide is just the tip of the iceberg on helpful resources in the library's holdings. Many of the suggested resources above have their own bibliographies. Each of these may lead you to another resource that would also be helpful in your research here in the museum or in another library. To find additional resources, use keywords such as "Hindu," "India," and "sculpture" in the online catalog and in periodical indexes. Once you find a few relevant titles, pay attention to the subject headings to identify similar materials. Examples of useful subject headings are:

Buddhism

Buddhism in art

Amitabha (Buddhist deity) Art

Art, Buddhist Japan

For guidelines about writing it may be helpful to look at Sylvan Barnet's *A Short Guide to Writing about Art*, which includes tips for looking, reading, and writing about art. Ask for it at the reference desk. At every stage of your work, please allow the library staff to help you. Contact us at 713-639-7323 or Hirsch@mfah.org