

Points of comparison: warriors or nobles? Heian period or Kamakura period?

Nobles considered elegant statues to be ideal, while warriors preferred realistic statues that looked as if they were just about to move. The difference in preference was perhaps influenced by the difference in the periods in history in which the statues were created: nobles played a leading role culturally in the Heian period (794–1192), while that role was taken over by warriors in the Kamakura period (1192–1333).

Please pay attention to the facial expression, posture, colors and overall appearance of the statues that were created in different periods. Can you notice how they changed?

Who are the Junishinsho (Twelve Heavenly Generals)?

Belonging to the category of *ten* (deva), the Junishinsho (Twelve Heavenly Generals) have the role of guards to protect Yakushi Nyorai (Bhaisajyaguru), who cures illness and increases one's life span, and to save people who believe in Yakushi Nyorai.

They were later associated with the twelve animals of the zodiac and hence each has a name of an animal from the twelve animals. However, there are no clear rules as to the combinations of animals and the statues' styles.

Who is Jizo Bosatsu (Ksitigarbha)?

Jizo Bosatsu (Ksitigarbha) is a bodhisattva who is believed to have the role of saving people in the period after Sakyamuni, the founder of Buddhism, entered Nirvana (Sakyamuni's death) and until Miroku Bosatsu (Maitreya) appears 5,670,000,000 years later.

Jizo Bosatsu statues typically look like traveling priests holding a *shakujo* (priest's staff) and a *hoju* (sacred jewel). A *shakujo* symbolizes the belief that Jizo Bosatsu will go even as far as hell to save people, while a *hoju* is believed to fulfill all hopes.



[Left]
◎ Standing Junishinsho (Twelve Heavenly Generals): Jutsushin (Dog General)
Kamakura period, 13th century
Formerly preserved at Joruriji, Kyoto

[Above]
◎ Standing Junishinsho (Twelve Heavenly Generals): Shishin (Mouse General)
Kamakura period, 12th–13th century
Lent by Sougenji, Kanagawa



◎ Standing Jizo Bosatsu (Ksitigarbha)
Heian period, 12th century
Lent by Joruriji, Kyoto



◎ Standing Jizo Bosatsu (Ksitigarbha)
By Zen'en
Kamakura period, dated 1240 (En'o 2)
Lent by Yakushiji, Nara

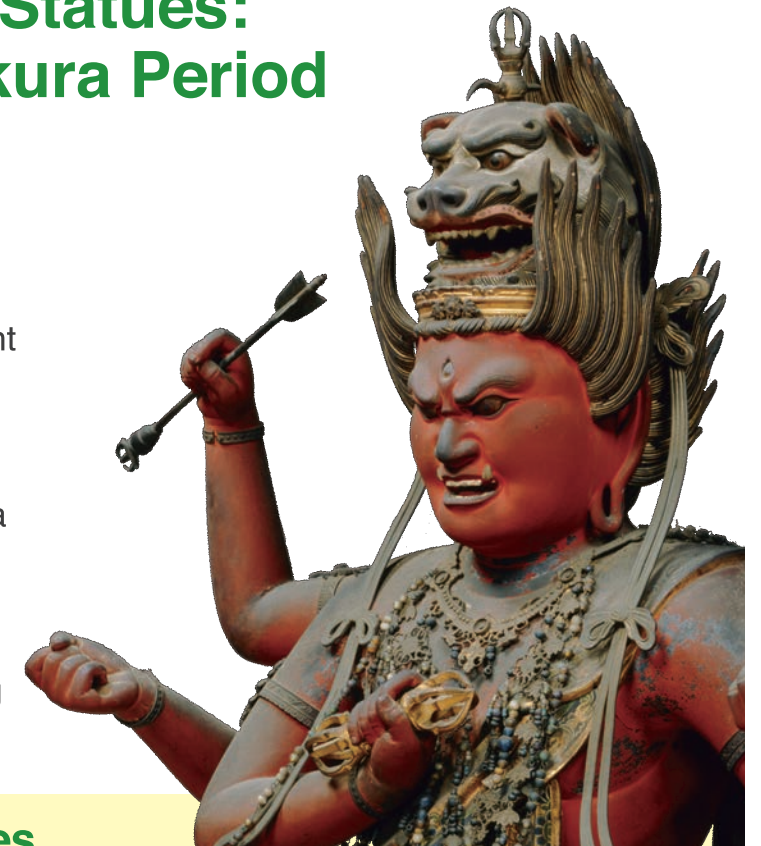
Family Gallery

Looking at Buddhist Statues: Statues of the Kamakura Period

Rooms 11 and 14, Honkan

Tuesday, June 10–Sunday, August 31, 2014

In Japan, many Buddhist statues have been created since Buddhism was brought into the country in the mid-6th century. This exhibition mainly displays Buddhist statues created in the Kamakura period (1192–1333). They are characterized by a fascinatingly vivacious style, which is not seen in Buddhist statues created earlier. Please enjoy looking closely at each statue, or comparing two statues standing next to each other.



Categories of Buddhist Statues

Buddhism includes multiple deities, partly because Buddhism incorporated deities from local religions while spreading its teachings. Each deity has a designated role to play, which is suitably reflected in its garments and facial expression.

Here, a great number of Buddhist deities have been roughly categorized into four groups. The characteristics of each group's garments and facial expressions are as follows:



Nyorai
(Buddha / Tathagata)

Nyorai (Buddha) have gentle facial expressions, reflecting their benevolence. Their characteristic features include a lump on the head, a distinctive hairstyle with many clumps of curled hair, and a garment which looks as if a large piece of fabric is wrapped around the body. Dainichi Nyorai (Mahavairocana) statues are an exception: they have hairstyles and garments similar to a *bosatsu* (bodhisattva).



Bosatsu
(Bodhisattva)

Like *nyorai*, *bosatsu* (bodhisattva) statues have calm expressions on their face. They are naked from the waist up, feature a waist garment, have their hair tied up, and wear accessories. This fashion is said to have been influenced by that of Indian nobles. The founder of Buddhism, Sakyamuni, was born into a noble family in India.



Myo'o
(Vidyaraja)

Strictness is sometimes needed in order to save people. That is why *myo'o* (vidyaraja) have angry expressions on their face. Their bodies are in various colors and sometimes they have many arms and legs. Their garments resemble those worn by *bosatsu* (bodhisattva).



Ten
(Deva)

There are particularly numerous kinds of *ten* (deva), and their roles are also diverse. The one on display is known as a guard who protects Buddhism: wearing armor, its facial expression is harsh.

Who is Monju Bosatsu (Manjusri)?

Monju Bosatsu (Manjusri) is a bodhisattva who presides over wisdom and is often shown with the hair done up on top of the head, wearing accessories and holding a sword. Monju Bosatsu is frequently depicted with a youthful appearance and riding a lion. In this example, there are four accompanying attendants.



© Seated Monju Bosatsu (Manjusri)
and Attendants
By Koen
Kamakura period, dated 1273 (Bun'ei 10)
Formerly preserved at Kohfukuji, Nara

Mount Wutai in northern China is known as a sacred place for Monju Bosatsu (Manjusri). To reach Japan, Monju Bosatsu had to cross the sea between China and Japan. That is why this statue's pedestal has a wave design, which shows that Monju Bosatsu is crossing the sea to come to Japan.

© = Important Cultural Property

Column: Cut-gold decoration (*Kirikane*)



Cut-gold decoration (*kirikane*) is a method of creating patterns and designs using thin strips of gold foil. The gold foil is first stacked in several layers then cut into strips using a bamboo knife. This method was often used to decorate Buddhist statues and Buddhist paintings. If you look very closely at cut-gold decoration on Buddhist statues, you may be amazed by the high detail and level of technical skill.

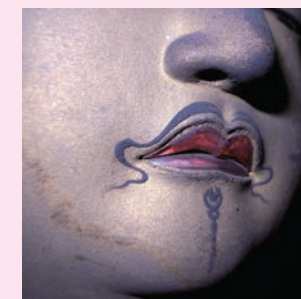
Who is Miroku Bosatsu (Maitreya)?

Miroku Bosatsu (Maitreya) is in a long period of meditation in a place called Tushita Heaven. Buddhists believe that Miroku Bosatsu will descend from Tushita Heaven to save people on earth 5,670,000,000 years after the death of the founder of Buddhism, Sakyamuni. People prayed that, via the Buddhist circle of transmigration (an endless cycle of birth, death and rebirth) they would be born at the time of Miroku Bosatsu's arrival. This statue represents Miroku Bosatsu's descent from Tushita Heaven.

This statue is very similar to another Buddhist statue that we know was created as a statue of the bodhisattva, Miroku Bosatsu. Therefore, this statue is also thought to be of Miroku Bosatsu. In the center of the jeweled crown there should be a small stupa tower, which would signify that it is Miroku Bosatsu, but it has been lost. Statues of Miroku Bosatsu were created in various poses; for example, holding a lotus flower with a stupa tower on it, or sat on a chair with one leg pendent and a finger touching the cheek. It seems that this statue also used to hold something in its left hand.

© Standing Bosatsu (Bodhisattva)
Kamakura period, 13th century

Column: Inlaid crystal eyes



To create eyes that glisten as though they are real, a sculptor hollows out the spaces for the eyeballs of a wooden statue and inserts crystal pieces from the back (from inside the head). If you peer into the eyes, you will see how they twinkle and shine.

Like the eyes, the lips of this bodhisattva statue are also decorated with crystal. The sculptor probably wanted to create the effect of lustrous lips. It is extremely rare for this technique to be used for lips of Buddhist statues.

