

The Who's Who of Japanese Deities

And how to identify them in Japanese art

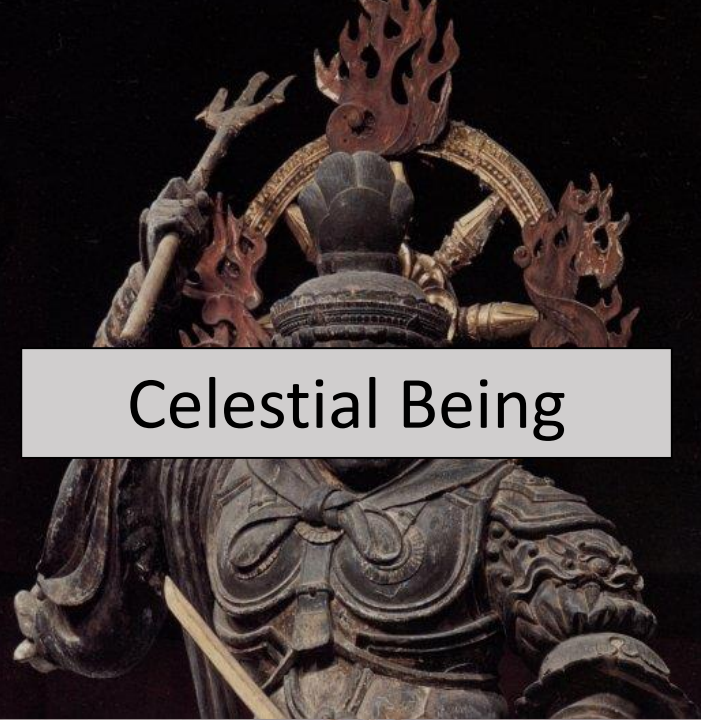
Test your knowledge

Slide One: Classification

Slide Two: Specific Deity



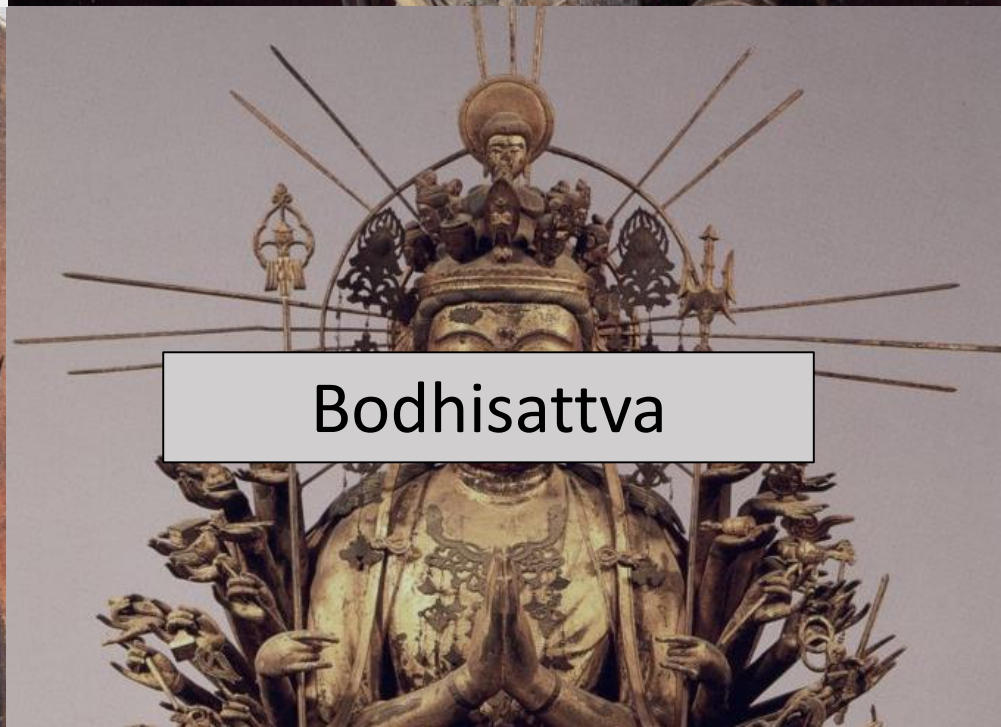
Buddha



Celestial Being



Wisdom King



Bodhisattva



Bishamonten



Amida



Jizō

Purpose of this series

- Art history perspective
- Classifications of Buddhist deity
- Basic terminology associated with Buddhist icons
- To help laypeople identify the most common figures by looking at specific features

What this series is not

(due to time constraints)

- A history of Buddhism in Japan
- A discussion of Buddhist teachings and practice
- A detailed narrative of iconographic transformation
- An exhaustive list of the Buddhist pantheon

Three Questions

- Who is the deity?
 - Origin
- What roles does he/she serve?
- How can he/she be identified?
 - Hand gesture (J: in 印)
 - Clothing, headgear
 - Implements, tools (J: jimotsu 持物)

There is always an exception.

The Hierarchy of Deities

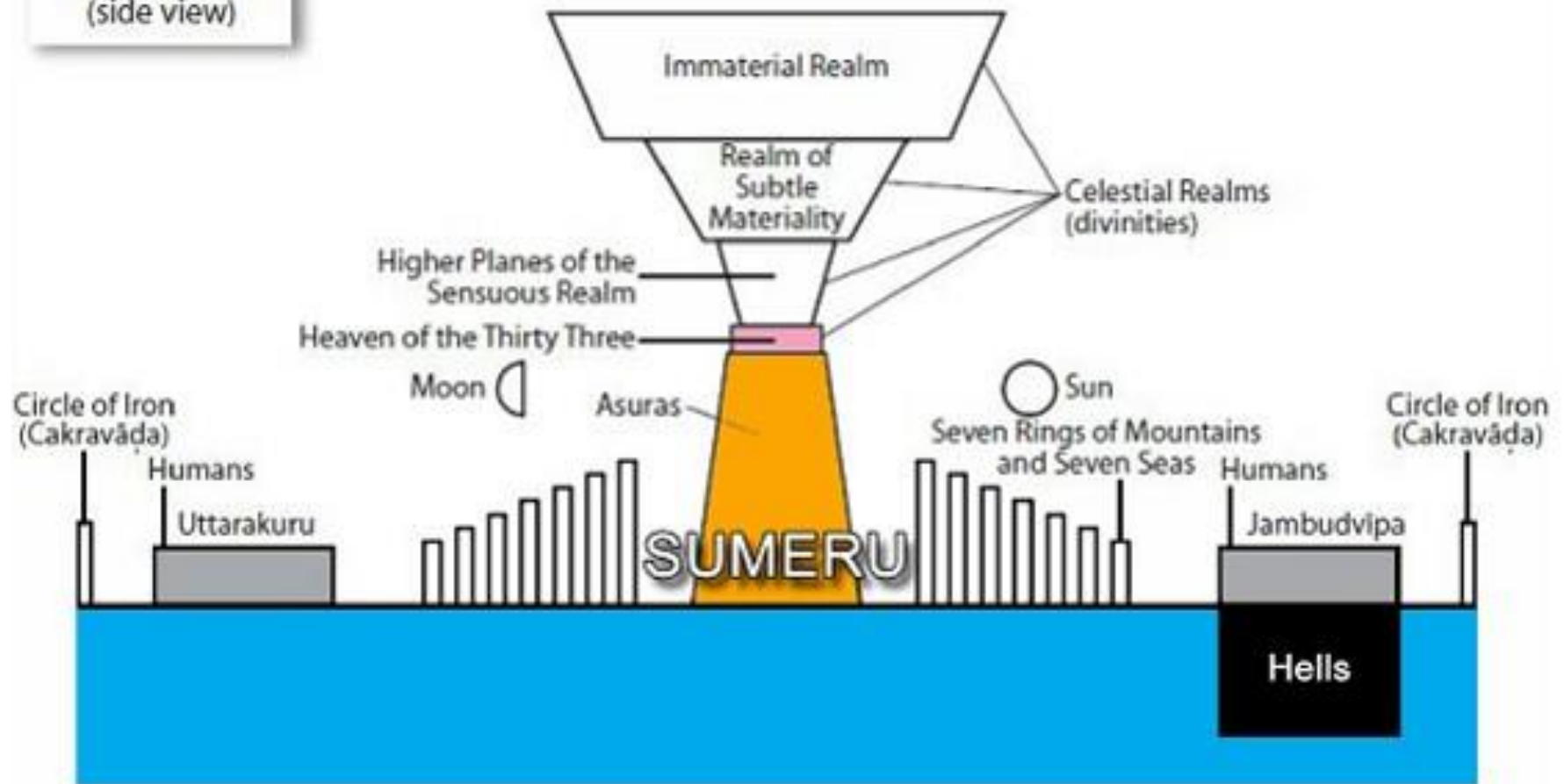
- Buddhas (J: nyorai 如来)
- Bodhisattvas (J: bosatsu 菩薩)
- Wisdom Kings (J: myōō 明王)
- Celestial Beings (J: tenbu 天部)

Tenbu 天部

- Guardians and protectors
- Attendants
- Adopted into the Buddhist pantheon
- Highest of the six realms of rebirth
 - Celestial Beings, Asuras, Humans, Animals, Hungry Ghosts, Hellish Beings
- Mortal; subject to demotion

Shumisen 須弥山

Mount Sumeru
World System
(side view)





Shitennō 四天王

- Lokapala; directional protectors
- Wrathful face (J: funnōsō 忿怒相)
- Headgear
- Chinese-style armor
- Demon (J: jyaki 邪鬼) underfoot

Tamonten
多聞天
North

Jikokuten
持国天
East

Zōchōten
増長天
South

Kōmokuten
広目天
West





Kōmokuten

- Virupaksa
- Deity of expansive vision
- Western slope
- Writing brush (J: fude 筆)
- Sutra scroll (J: kyōkan 經卷)



Tamonten

- Kuvera; Vaisravana
- Deity of prosperity
- Northern slope
- Chief of the shitennō
- Treasure pagoda (J: hōtō 宝塔)
- Trident (J: sansageki 三叉戟) or baton (J: hōbō 宝棒)

Taishakuten 帝釈天



- Indra
- Presides over Tōriten 忉利天
- Chief of the celestial beings
- Robes or armor
- Thunderbolt (J: kongō 金剛)
- Sometimes seated on an elephant



Bishamonten 毘沙門天

- Tamonten, but independent
- Nearly identical in appearance

Shichifukujin 七福神



- Likely a Muromachi (1392-1573) grouping
- Daoist
- Shintō
- Buddhist
- Treasure boat (J: takarabune 宝船)

Benzaiten 弁才天



- Sarasvati
- Patron deity of the arts
- Two-armed version
- Eight-armed version
- Chinese-style robes
- Lute (J: biwa 琵琶)

Kichijōten 吉祥天



- Lakshmi
- Deity of prosperity and good fortune
- Tang dynasty (618-906) court lady dress
- Wish-fulfilling jewel (J: nyoihōju 如意宝珠)
- Lotus (J: renga 蓮華)
- Mudra of charity (J: yogan-in 与願印)

Associated with Bishamonten

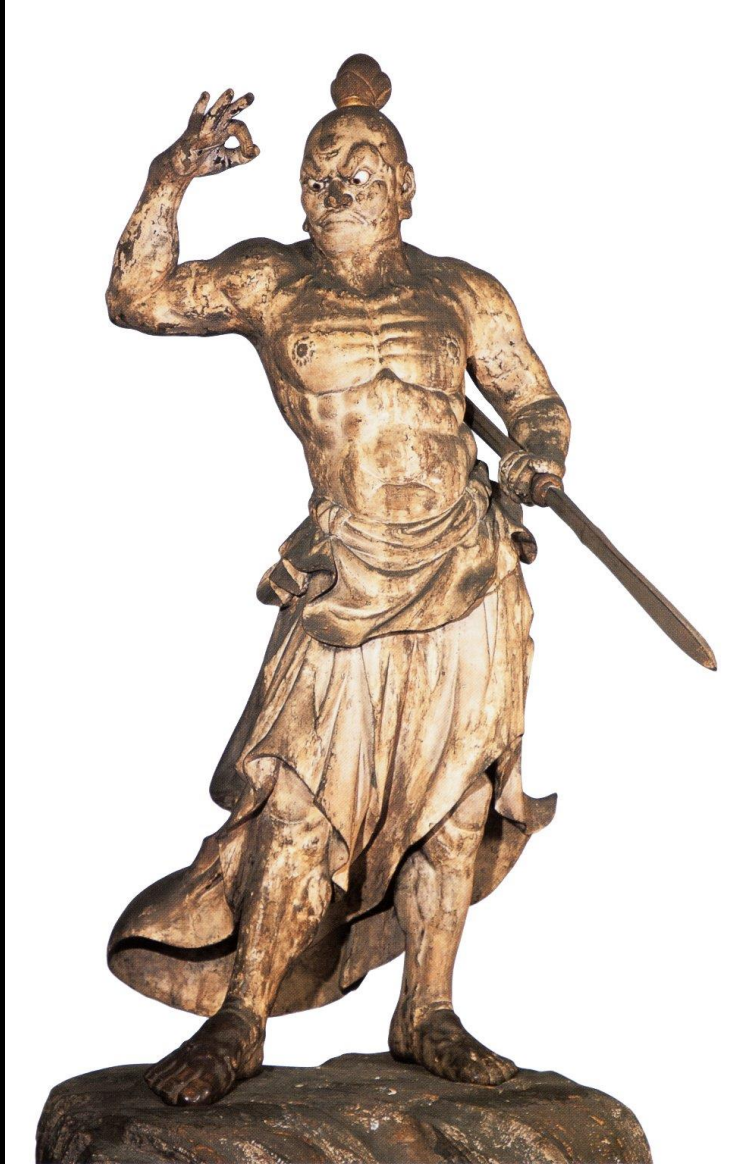


Niō 仁王

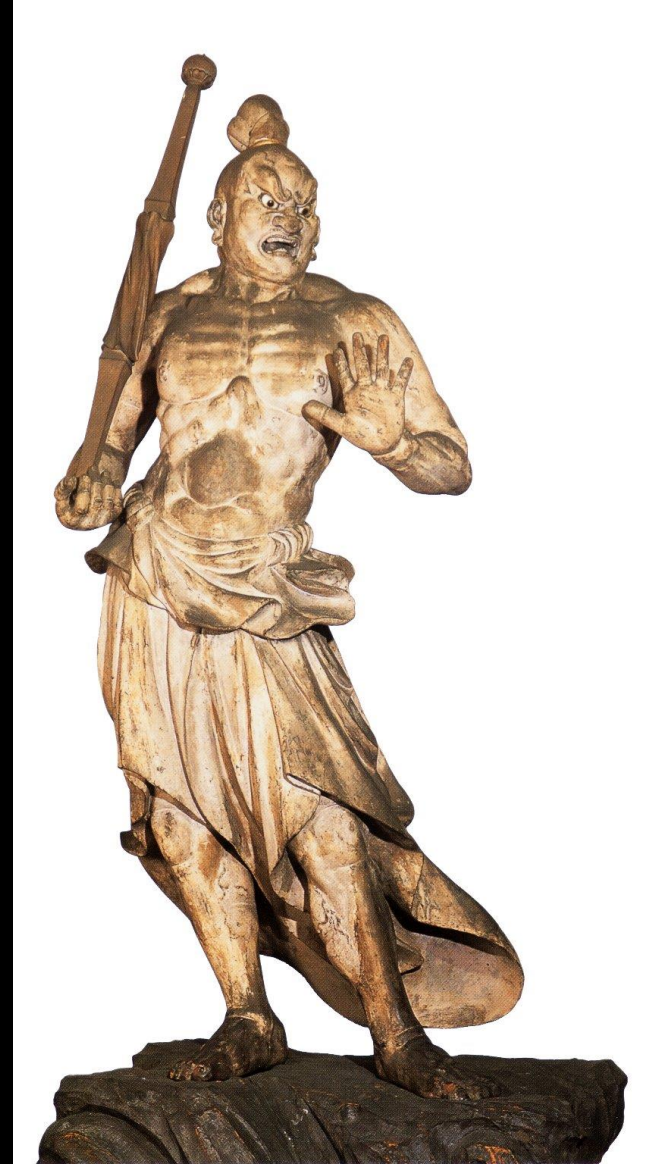


- Benevolent Kings
- Dvarapala: gate guardians
- Vajrapani; in Japan, Shukongōshin 執金剛神
- Bodyguard for historical buddha
- Usually shirtless; heavily muscled

Ungyō 吽形
(sword)



Agyō 阿形
(thunderbolt)



Jūnishinshō 十二神将



- Twelve divine generals
- Originally yaksa (J: yasha 夜叉)
- Attendants to and emanations of Yakushi 薬師
- Martial postures
- Flame-like hair; helmets
- Sometimes with emblematic animal motifs



- Rat
- Ox
- Tiger
- Rabbit
- Dragon
- Snake
- Horse
- Sheep
- Monkey
- Rooster
- Dog
- Pig

Quiz

1



2



3





1

Jūnishinhō



2

Niō



3

Shitennō



4

Bishamonten/
Tamonten



5

Jūnishinhō –
Dragon General



Sites

- Shitennō – Hōryūji 法隆寺; Kaijūsenji 海住山寺
- Shitennō with Taishakuten – Tōji 東寺
- Bishamonten and Kichijōten – Hōryūji 法隆寺
- Kichijōten – Jōruriji 浄瑠璃寺
- Eight-armed Benzaiten – Yakushiji 薬師寺
- Two-armed Benzaiten - Tsurugaoka Hachimangū
鶴岡八幡宮
- Niō – Tōdaiji 東大寺
- Jūnishinshō – Shin'yakushiji 新薬師寺

Questions
via the Q&A function

Please take a moment to complete the digital lecture questionnaire. If you would like to comment on today's programming, you may do so through the Q&A function.

Further questions can be directed to my michaelvanhartingsveldt@gmail.com