The Who’s Who of Japanese Deities
And how to identify them in Japanese art
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)
There is always an exception.
Six Realms of Rebirth (J: rokudō 六道)

- Of celestial beings (J: tendō 天道)
- Of humans (J: jindō 人道)
- Of ashuras (J: ashuradō 阿修羅道)
- Of animals (J: chikushōdō 畜生道)
- Of hungry ghosts (J: gakidō 餓鬼道)
- Of hellish beings (J: jigokudō 地獄道)
Bosatsu 菩薩

• Enlightened beings
• Delay Buddhahood
• Ministers/guides (to non-enlightened beings)
• Princely garb
• Jewelry and ornamental bands
Triad (J: sanzon 三尊)

- Attendants to a buddha
- Left-right arrangement: Yakushi triad
  - Nikkō bosatsu 日光菩薩 and Gakkō bosatsu 月光菩薩
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Kannon bosatsu
観音菩薩

- Avalokitesvara
- Male/female
- Associated with compassion
- Exceptionally popular
- Attendant to Amida nyorai
  - To his proper left
- Buddha in crown (J: kebutsu 化仏)
- Thirty-three forms (J: sanjūsanshin 三十三身)
- Six Kannon (J: Roku kannon 六観音)
Kannon bosatsu
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- Six Kannon (J: Roku kannon 六観音)
Senju kannon
千手観音
Thousand-armed Kannon
Hungry Ghosts

Hungry Ghosts
Batō kannon
馬頭観音
Horse-headed Kannon
Animals

Stō kannon
聖観音
Sacred Kannon
Hellish Beings
Jūichimen Kannon
Eleven-headed Kannon
Ashuras

Juntei Kannon
Pure Kannon
Humans

Nyoirin Kannon
如意輪観音
Wish-fulfilling Kannon
Celestial Beings
(Dai)Seishi bosatsu
勢至菩薩

• Mahasthamaprapta
• Associated with wisdom
• Attendant to Amida nyorai
  • To his proper right
• Water jar (J: suibyō 水瓶) in crown
• Mudra of respect (J: gasshō-in 合掌印)
(Dai)Seishi bosatsu
勢至菩薩

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  (J: gashō-in 合掌印)
Jizō bosatsu
地蔵菩薩

- Ksitigarbha
- Associated with salvation
- Attendant to Amida (occasionally replaces Seishi)
- Monk-like appearance
  - Bald head
  - Simple robes
  - Lacking ornamentation
- Wish-fulfilling jewel (J: hōju 宝珠)
- Staff (J: shakujō 錫杖)
  - Rings in finial
- Six Jizō (J: Roku Jizō 六地蔵)
Jizō bosatsu
地蔵菩薩

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Jizō and the Hells

- Deceased souls judged by Ten Kings (J: Jūō 十王)
- Jizō as intercessor/savior
Sai no kawara 賽の河原

• Jizō: protector of children
• Young children who predecease their parents
• Stack riverbed stones
• Possible origin of red bibs
Sai no kawara 賽の河原

- Jizō: protector of children
- Young children who predecease their parents
- Stack riverbed stones
- Possible origin of red bibs
Monju bosatsu
文殊菩薩

- Manjushri
- Associated with wisdom
- Attendant to Shaka nyorai
  - To his proper left
- Sword in right hand
- Scroll or lotus in left hand
- Seated on lion
Monju bosatsu
文殊菩薩

• Manjushri
• Associated with wisdom
• Attendant to Shaka nyorai
  • To his proper left
• Sword in right hand
• Scroll or lotus in left hand
• Seated on lion
Fugen bosatsu
普賢菩薩

- Samantabhadra
- Associated with practice
- Attendant to Shaka nyorai
  - To his proper right
- Often forms the gasshō-in
- May also hold a scroll, lotus, or scepter
- Seated on six-tusked elephant
Fugen bosatsu
普賢菩薩

- Samantabhadra
- Associated with practice
- Attendant to Shaka nyorai
  - To his proper right
- Often forms the gasshō-in
- May also hold a scroll, lotus, or scepter
- Seated on six-tusked elephant
Miroku bosatsu 弥勒菩薩

- Maitreya
- Buddha of the future
- Ministers to beings in the Tusita Heaven
- Pensive posture (J: hanka shiyuizō 半跏思惟像)
  - Right leg crossed over left knee; left leg pendant
  - Hand to cheek
- Also has a buddha form (stay tuned...)
Quiz
via the poll function

*Note: you may have to move the poll on your screen so you can see the images
Sites

• Kannon bosatsu – Yakushiji 薬師寺 (Nara), Sangatsudō 三月堂 at Tōdaiji 東大寺 (Nara), Kiyomizudera 清水寺 (Kyoto), Sanjūsangendō 三十三間堂 (Kyoto)
• Roku Kannon – Daihōonji 大報恩寺 (Kyoto)
• Jizō bosatsu – Kōryūji 広隆寺 (Kyoto), Shin’yakushiji 新薬師寺 (Nara)
• Monju bosatsu – Daikōji 大光寺 (Miyazaki), Saidaiji 西大寺 (Nara)
• Fugen bosatsu – Okurashūkōkan 大倉集古館 (Tokyo), Sanjūsangendō 三十三間堂 (Kyoto)
• Miroku bosatsu – Chūgūji 中宮寺 (Nara), Kōryūji 広隆寺 (Kyoto)
Questions
via the Q&A function
Thank you for joining us today!

Our next virtual lecture, which will cover buddhas, will take place on August 27, 2020, at 7 pm PST.

Hope to see you there!
Please take a moment to complete the digital lecture questionnaire via the poll function. 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