

Arts of Asia Lecture Series Spring 2015  
Masterpieces and Iconic Artworks of the Asian Art Museum  
*Sponsored by The Society for Asian Art*

Samuel Morse, Amherst College, April 17<sup>th</sup> 2015

**The Asian Art Museum Statues  
of  
Bonten and Taishakuten  
and  
Kōfukuji**

**Brief Chronology**

- 669 Establishment of Yamashinadera
- 694 Founding of the Fujiwara Capital
- 708 Decision to move the capital is made
- 710 Founding of the Heijō (Nara) Capital
- 714 Kōfukuji is founded; construction on the Central Image Hall is begun
- 721 North Octagonal Hall
- 726 East Image Hall
- 730 Five-story Pagoda
- 734 West Image Hall
- 741 Shōmu orders the establishment of a national system of monasteries and nunneries
- 743 Shōmu vows to make a giant gilt-bronze statue of the Cosmic Buddha
- 747 Casting of the Great Buddha is begun
- 752 Dedication of the Great Buddha
- 768 Establishment of Kasuga Shrine
- 784 Heijō is abandoned; Nagaoka Capital is founded
- 794 Heian (Kyoto) is founded
- 813 South Octagonal Hall

**Kōfukuji**

Tutelary temple of the Fujiwara clan, founded in 714. One of the most influential monastic centers in Japan throughout the temple's history. Original location of the statues of Bonten and Taishaku ten in the collection of the Asian Art Museum.

Important extant eighth century works include:

Statues of the Ten Great Disciples of the Buddha  
Statues of the Eight Classes of Divine Protectors of the Buddhist Faith  
Statues of Bonten and Taishakuten, Asian Art Museum

### **Kasuga Shrine** (Kasuga Taisha)

Tutelary shrine of the Fujiwara clan and protective shrine of the Heijō Capital. Established at the foot of Mt. Mikasa at the eastern edge of the Heijō capital in 768. The present shrine structures are of later date, however, they reflect shrine architectural styles of the early Heian period. Closely affiliated with Kōfukuji.

### **Major Patrons**

Fujiwara no Fuhito (659-720), patriarch of the clan and father of Kōmyō.  
Shōmu (701-756; r. 724-749), 45th emperor of Japan.  
Kōmyō (701-760), consort of Shōmu, member of Fujiwara clan.  
Kōken (718-770; r. 749-758 and 764-770), daughter of Shōmu and Kōmyō, 46th monarch.

### **Sculpture Techniques**

Bronze (lost-wax)  
Clay  
Hollow dry-lacquer  
Wood

### **Devas**

Bonten, Vedic deity Brahmā incorporated into the Buddhist pantheon. Lord of all devas. Paired with Taishakuten.  
Taishakuten, Vedic deity Indra incorporated into the Buddhist pantheon.  
Protector of the Buddhist dharma. Paired with Bonten.

### **Suggested Reading**

Moran, Sherwood F. "Ashura, a Dry Lacquer Statue of the Nara Period." *Artibus Asiae*, vol. XXVII (1966), pp. 91-133.  
Morse, Samuel C. "Japanese Sculpture in Transition: An Eighth-Century Example from the Todai-ji Buddhist Sculpture Workshop." *Museum Studies [Art Institute of Chicago]* 13, no. 1 (1987): 52-69.  
Nishikawa Kyotarō. *The Great Age of Japanese Buddhist Sculpture*. Fort Worth, Texas: Kimball Art Museum, 1982.  
Sugiyama, Jirō. *Classic Buddhist Sculpture: The Tempyo Period*. Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1982.

# The Rebuilding of Kōfukuji In the Kamakura Period

## Brief Chronology

- 1180 Destruction of Kōfukuji, Tōdaiji and other Nara temples
- 1181 Rebuilding of Kōfukuji is begun
- 1181 Shunjōbō Chōgen is appointed Solicitor to raise funds for the reconstruction of Tōdaiji
- 1185 Rededication of the Great Buddha, Tōdaiji
- 1189 Completion of the replacement statues for the south Octagonal Hall
- 1196 Completion of the statue of Vimalakirti for the East Image Hall
- 1207 Completion of the statues of the Twelve Divine Generals for the East Image Hall
- 1208 Start of construction of the North Octagonal Hall and its images
- 1212 Completion of the statue for the North Octagonal Hall
- 1415 Reconstruction of the east Image Hall
- 1426 Reconstruction of the Five-story Pagoda
- 1868 Start of the Meiji era; separation of Buddhist and Shinto institutions begins
- 1888 First modern restoration of the temple

## Important Artists and Their Works

Kōkei, father of Unkei, teacher of Kaikei, head of the Kōfukuji atelier which later becomes the Kei School. Active late 12th century.

Fukukensaku Kannon. Kōfukuji, ca. 1189.

Six Patriarchs of the Hossō Sect. Kōfukuji, ca. 1189

Four Deva Kings. Kōfukuji, ca. 1189.

Unkei, son of Kōkei, born ca. 1150, died 1223. Father of Tankei.

Dainichi. Enjōji, dated 1176

Dainichi. Private Collection, datable to 1193

Niō statues. (with Kaikei). Tōdaiji, 1203

Miroku Buddha. Kōfuku-ji, ca. 1208-1212

Muchaku (Vasubandhu) and Seshin (Asanga). Kōfukuji, 1208-1212

Kaikei, disciple of Kōkei. Active late 12th early 13th cent. Also called An'Amida Butsu.

Maitreya. BMFA, dated 1189

Amida triad. Jōdoji, dated 1192

Niō statues (with Unkei). Tōdaiji, dated 1203

Jōkei I, probably a brother or cousin of Unkei. Active ca. 1200.

Niō statues. Kōfuku-ji, early 13th cen.

Tankei, eldest son of Unkei. Born 1178, died 1256. Head of the Shichijō Atelier.

Thousand-armed Kannon. Sanjusangendō, dated 1254.

Twenty-eight Classes of the Divine Protectors of the Buddhist Faith (with atelier).  
Completed 1254

Kōben, third son of Unkei.

Lamp-bearing Demons. Kōfuku-ji, dated 1215

Other statues mentioned in class:

Amida triad. Chōgakuji, dated 1151

Zenshun. Portrait of Eison. Saidaiji, datable to 1280

### **Suggested Readings**

Mōri, Hisashi. *Sculpture of the Kamakura Period*. Tokyo: Weatherhill, 1978.

Morse, Samuel C. "Animating the Image: Buddhist Portrait Sculpture of the Kamakura Period." *Oriental Art* vol. 35, no. 1 (January/February 2004), pp. 22-30.

Nishikawa Kyotarō. *The Great Age of Japanese Buddhist Sculpture*. Fort Worth, Texas: Kimball Art Museum, 1982.