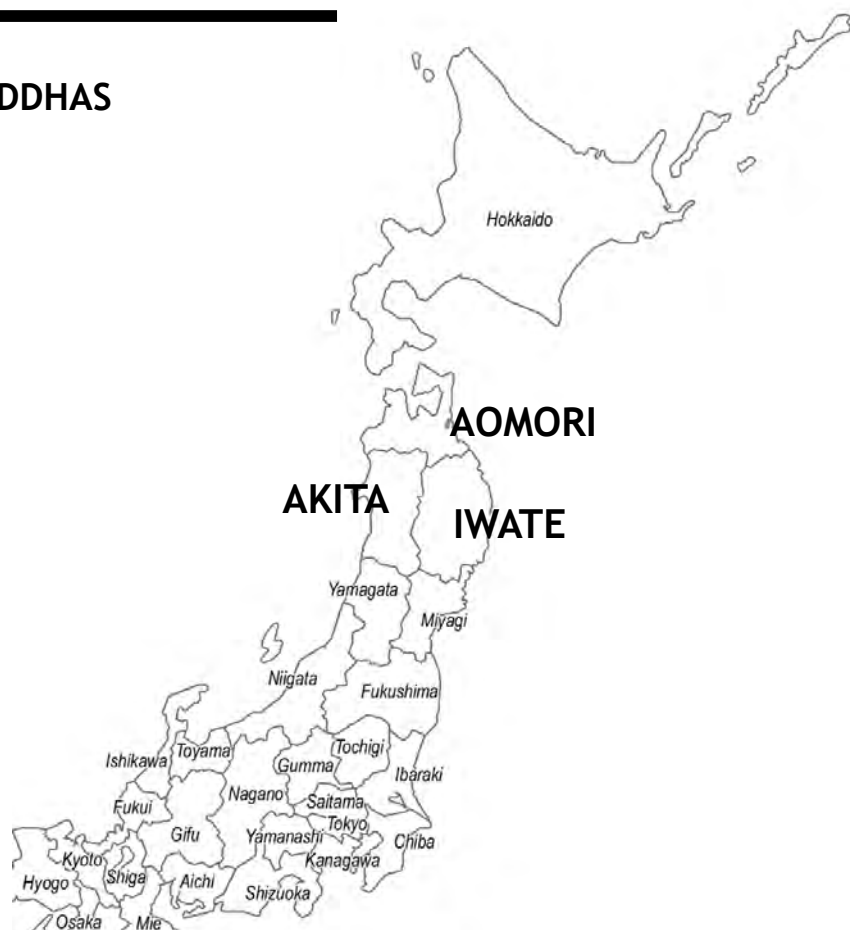


THE BELOVED GODS AND BUDDHAS OF NORTHEASTERN JAPAN

December 2, 2023 —
February 12, 2024
Tokyo Station Gallery

English Commentaries
on Selected Works



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Standing Buddha

Tendai-ji / Ninohe-shi, Iwate

Tendai-ji has been a sacred place of Kannon worship since before the Oshu Fujiwara clan. The so-called "machete carving" does not mean that the statue is unfinished, but rather that it was carved in a short period of time for a special wish, and the Tendai-ji statue is a good example of this. The statue's pointed head and mustache-like upper lip are expressions that are difficult to capture in a Buddhist context.

10

Guardian Deity of the Mountain

Anigawayamakamisha / Hachimantai-shi, Iwate

This mountain god is still revered by people involved in the forestry industry. His large face, slightly protruding eyes and nose, narrow shoulders, and very modest pose with his palms together make him an appropriate main visual for this exhibition. The round head and square bento box-like upper body are a perfect match.

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Standing Kannon Bosatsu (Avalokiteśvara)

25 Bosatsu Figure Preservation Committee /
Ichinoseki-shi, Iwate

This statue is probably the gentlest bodhisattva statue in Michinoku (Northeastern Japan). The feather-like waist cloth is full of mysterious elements. From the inscription on the back, we know that it was enshrined in 1688 in the village of Takouzu, just north of Matsukawa.

29-34

Standing Roku Kannon Bosatsu (Six Manifestations of Avalokiteśvara)

Housyakuji / Kuzumaki-machi, Iwate

The simple face carved from high-quality katsura wood contrasts with the elaborate folds of the robe. The six Avalokiteśvara Kannon statues (Shō-Kannon, Senju-Kannon, Batō-Kannon, Jūichimen-Kannon, Juntei-Kannon, and Nyoirin-Kannon), which are thought to have been created for some memorial service, are superbly sculpted with the serenity of prayer and ornamentation.

35-37

Standing Fudō Myōō (Acalanatha) and Two Children Attendants

Tōenji / Takko-machi, Aomori

The mischievous-looking Seitaka-doji (left), with his bulging muscles, and the plump, smiling Kongara-doji (right), with his gentle smile, stand on either side of the hip-twisted Fudō Myōō. They appear to be a unique trio from a mountainous region.

45

Standing Tamonten (Vaiśravaṇa)

Honkakuji / Imabetsu-machi, Aomori

The Tamonten, which local fishermen still visit once a year to pray for, has been hidden behind a bamboo blind for so long that it retains its original coloring. The statue plays the four roles of Dragon God, King Enma, Daikokuten, and Tamonten. The local shipbuilders knew the original image of Tamonten, of course, but they carved this statue in response to people's desire to add two or three more roles to it.

51-56

Seated Ten Kings of Hell

Sanzugawa Village Residents' Association /
Yuzawa-shi, Akita

These Ten Kings statues are crude and dirty, with missing limbs and even burn marks, bodies out of balance, colors peeling, and only inked patterns remaining on the decorative parts. However, in the modest expression on the face, the heart of a man who fears hell and prays for salvation is concentrated. The faintly open-mouthed, smiling expression on the face is an expression that would not normally be found on the Ten Kings, but it is an expression that can only be found on folk Buddhas, where faith and sculpture are directly connected.

79

Demon

Shōfukuji / Kuzumaki-machi, Iwate

A demon, who torments the deceased in hell for their sins, is posed with a woman in his left hand, looking very pleased with himself. The demon is wearing a headscarf, but his large ears are not fully concealed, and even the hair on his chest, belly button, and shins is comically depicted. Demons associated with hell are meant to warn people against sinful behavior, but the fact that they are depicted in such an amusing manner may reflect a wish to laugh off the hardships of this life.

119

Kneeling Youthful Deity

(The Repentant Dead) by Emonshirō

Hōrenji / Towada-shi, Aomori

The rounded bottom of the statue is designed to swing back and forth, overlapping the image of a child repeatedly apologizing to demons and ten kings in hell, or a child piling up stones on the riverbank of the Sai-no-Kawara. There are many such statues in Towada, both martial and gentle, carved by the carpenter Emonshirō.

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Seated Avalokiteśvara Holding a Child

Jigenji / Goshogawara-shi, Aomori

Is it the mother's feelings for the little life she could not save, or the grief of the family who lost both mother and child, that is reflected in this statue? The poorly expressed hand holding the baby firmly in its arms may express straightforward and earnest prayer.