**A Host of Heavenly Beings**

**The Main Statues**

There are around fifty *butsuzo*, or religious statues, in the *kondo* main hall. They are arranged hierarchically, with the Healing Buddha (*Yakushi Nyorai*) occupying the central position on the main dais as the principal object of worship. On either side of the Healing Buddha are a *Nikko* (Sunlight) *Bosatsu* and *Gakko* (Moonlight) *Bosatsu* from the early Heian period (794–1185). They survived a 1417 fire in which the original Healing Buddha statue was destroyed. Compassionate beings who have put off their own enlightenment to save others, *bosatsu* always wear elaborate robes, with a sash and a crown of sunlight or moonlight.

The statues at either end of the central dais are the four heavenly kings (*Shitennō*). Originally gods from India, their role is to guard the faith. They are armed, have a flaming nimbus around their heads, and are trampling devils underfoot. With their contorted shapes, multiple limbs, and mischievous faces, these devils are well worth a close look.

The turquoise *washi* paper behind the dais dates from the 1997－2004 restoration of the temple. It is decorated with the crests of the imperial household: the chrysanthemum and the paulownia.

**Other statues**

In the rear shrine (*kojin*) are five *nyorai* from the Muromachi period (1336–1573). Made of wood, except for the one in the center which is bronze, they used to be in a pagoda that once stood in the temple grounds. The plump and genial-looking god at the far end of the *kojin* is Daikokuten, one of seven lucky gods who bring prosperity and good fortune.

Returning to the inner shrine (*naijin*), there is an enmeifugenbosatsu supported by four large elephants (and multiple smaller elephants below them) in the corner. It has twenty arms on the principle that the more limbs a god has, the more people it can help. The elephants—not an animal native to Japan—are of a slightly eccentric shape, with elongated bodies and oversized, human-looking eyes made of crystal.

In the west corner of the inner shrine is a wooden statue of a seated monk. This is Kukai, the Buddhist monk who brought esoteric Buddhism from China to Japan and established Shingon Buddhism on Mt. Koya in Wakayama.