

Nikkō Bosatsu and Gakkō Bosatsu

Many traditional depictions of Yakushi Nyorai show him flanked by two bodhisattvas, Nikkō Bosatsu and Gakkō Bosatsu. They are Yakushi's divine attendants and represent sunlight and moonlight, respectively. In Buddhist theology, bodhisattvas are beings who have chosen to delay enlightenment in order to remain in the world to guide others to nirvana. Images of bodhisattvas often feature jewelry and adornments, such as the elaborate headdresses worn here by Nikkō and Gakkō. This is in stark contrast to images of Buddhas, who are usually shown wearing only simple robes with no other bodily embellishment.

Nikkō and Gakkō are depicted as mirror images of each other, with Nikkō on the right and Gakkō on the left. Their light is said to illuminate Yakushi Nyorai's teachings. All three figures in the triad were completed in 1603 and are Important Cultural Properties.