

### **Twelve Heavenly Generals**

Yakushi Nyorai, the Buddha of medicine and healing, is often depicted surrounded by a group of fearsome guardians called the Twelve Heavenly Generals. They are his protectors, and in this statue they circle the base upon which he sits. The Generals have their origins in India as *yaksha*, a type of Hindu nature spirit. They were later incorporated into Buddhism as spirits to protect the teachings of the Buddha. The number twelve has many overlapping connotations in Buddhism and other Asian traditions, including the twelve signs of the Chinese zodiac, the twelve cosmic directions, and the Twelve Vows of Yakushi Nyorai.