

Four Heavenly Kings (Skt: Chaturmahārāja)

The Four Heavenly Kings (Shitenno) watch over the four cardinal directions. Tamonten (Skt: Vaiśravaṇa) guards the north, Zochoten (Skt: Virūdhaka) protects the south, Jikokuten (Skt: Dhṛtarāstra) is king of the east, and Komokuten (Skt: Virūpākṣa) defends the west. Collectively, they ward off evil, protect the country, and guard the world against malicious spirits.

Typically, the Shitenno are depicted with fearsome faces, are clad in armor, and holding sacred objects to suppress their enemies. The kings stand upon the backs of four *amanojaku*, demon-like creatures that they trample and subjugate. Each statue is about 203 centimeters high. They were carved from camphor wood and date to the eleventh century. They are particularly large images of their type from that time.