

Hindu Contributions to Japanese Religion



January 2005
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Japanese Names for Some Hindu Gods/Goddesses

God	Indian Name	Japanese Name
1. Seagod	Varuna	Suiten (水天)
2. King of Gods	Indira	Taishakuten (帝釈天)
3. God of Success	Ganesha	Shoten (聖天)
4. God of Wealth	Kuvera	Bishamon (毘沙門)
5. Goddess of Learning	Sarasvati	Benten (弁天)
6. Goddess of Fortune	Lakshmi / Shridevi	Kichijoten / Kisshoten (吉祥天)
7. Mahesh	Shiva	Daikoku(“Great Black One”) (大黒)
8. Divine Architect	Vishvakarma	Bishukatsuma (毘首羯磨)

***Boldfaced deities represent the Shichifukujin (七福神) Japanese deities.**

Ganesh (Shoten 聖天)



Shoten



From:
<http://www.z-shoten.or.jp/>



Shoten (聖天)

Shichifukujin 七福神 ("Seven Lucky Gods" of Japan)

- 3 of the 7 have Hindu origins
 - Daikoku-ten 大黒天 (Mahakala / Maheshvara)
 - Benten / Benzai-ten 弁財天 (Saraswati)
 - Bishamon-ten 毘沙門天 (Kuber / Kuvera)
- **Even though these gods have Japanese names, each of them is associated with a "seed mantra" that is the first letter of their original Sanskrit name.**
- **The "-ten" "天" suffix in Japanese is an epithet for a god/goddess.**

Maheshwar/Mahakala (Daikoku 大黒)



Daikokuten 大黒天



Maheshwar



Siddham Script:
“Ma” Seed Mantra

Saraswati (Benten)



Benten (Benzaiten) 弁財天



Saraswati (also with a swan & instrument)



Siddham Script: "Sa" Seed Mantra

Kuber/Kuvera (Bishamon 毘沙門 / Tamon-Ten 多聞天) (aka Vaisravana)



Kuvera (Vaishravana)



Bishamon 毘沙門



Siddham Script:
“Vai” Seed Mantra

Lakshmi (Kichijoten 吉祥天)



Kichijoten 吉祥天



Kichijoten holds a “wish-granting jewel” in her left hand.

Lakshmi (Kichijoten 吉祥天)



Kichijoten 吉祥天



Lakshmi

Brahma (Bonten 梵天)



Bonten 梵天



Brahma

Brahma (Bonten 梵天)



Bonten



Brahma

4 Lokapalas (Shitenno)

Hindu (Sanskrit Buddhist) Name

- Kuber (Vaishravana)
(North)
- Yama (Virudhaka)
(South)
- Indra (Dhritarashtra)
(East)
- Varuna (Virupaksha)
(West)

Japanese Name

- Taishakuten (Indra)*
- Tamon-ten (Bishamon)
多聞天 (毘沙門)
 - Zouchoten (Zochoten)
增長天
 - Jikokuten (Dhritarashtra)
持国天
 - Koumokuten (Komokuten)
広目天

Some of the Hindu deities with multiple roles are split into multiple Japanese deities, each having a specific role.

Indra (Taishakuten 帝釈天)



Indra

On website of Japanese embassy in Nepal:
<http://www.np.emb-japan.go.jp/history/diet.html>

Indra (Taishakuten 帝釈天)



Siddham Script:
“Ee” Seed Mantra

Taishakuten 帝釈天 (riding an elephant like Indra)

From:

<http://www.onmarkproductions.com/html/taishakuten.shtml>

Kuber/Kuvera
(Bishamon 毘沙門 / Tamon-Ten 多聞天)
(aka Vaisravana): North



Kuvera (Vaishravana)



Bishamon 毘沙門



Siddham: "Vai"

Zouchoten/Zochoten 增長天 (Virudhaka): South



Zouchoten (Japanese)
增長天



Siddham Script:
“Vi” Seed Mantra



Yama (Hindu)



Virudhaka (Sanskrit Buddhist)

Varuna: God of the Sea (Suiten 水天) (Varuna is also Lokapala of West)



Suiten 水天



Varuna

From:

<http://www.dharmakshetra.com/demigods/demigods%201.html>

Yama (Enmaten)



Enmaten 閻魔天(riding a bull like Yama)



Yama

*In Hindu belief, Yama has the dual role of guarding the Southern direction and of being the Lord of Death.

Bodhidharma (Daruma 達磨)



11th century portrait of Bodhidharma



15th century painting of Bodhidharma



Modern Daruma dolls

Garuda (Karura 迦楼羅)



Noh mask of Karura



Garuda

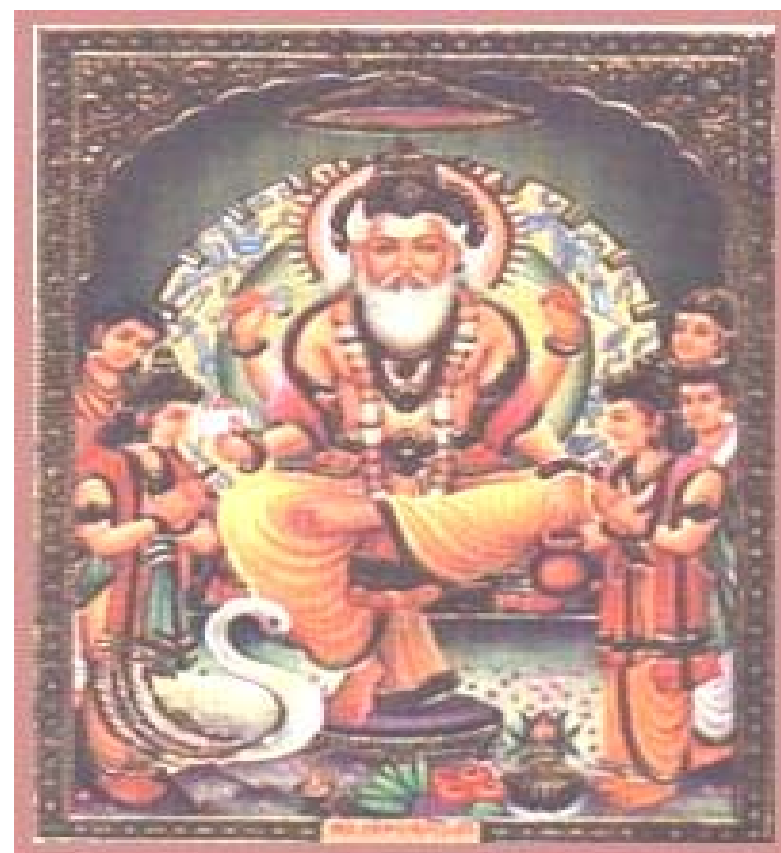


Karura 迦楼羅

Vishvakarma (Bishukatsuma)



Bishukatsuma 毘首羯磨



Vishvakarma



Traditional Fire Ceremony

A *Gomado* (護摩堂) is a small smoky shrine where the sacred fire is prepared in an ancient round hearth. Cypress wood is burned and the flame is used to light the tip of a three-meter-long bamboo pole. (Similar to Hindu ceremony of *havan*.)

Source: <http://www.shambhalasun.com/Archives/Features/1998/May98/simpson.htm>



Called *Bonsho* (梵鐘) in Japanese, meaning “Indian bell,” this temple bell’s deep gong at Buddhist temples especially in the evenings gave people a sense of rest after their day’s toil.

It is struck 108 times on New Year’s Eve to ring in the New Year and drive out the 108 evil desires that man is heir to. (*Joya-no-kane* 除夜の鐘)

Sources: <http://www.hilobetsuin.org/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=13&Itemid=3>

<http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/illustrated/culture/e.html>

Siddham Script in Japan

अ	आ	इ	ई	उ	ऊ	ऋ	ॠ	ऌ	ॡ	ए	ऐ	ओ	औ	
a	ā	i	ī	u	ū	r̥	r̄	l̥	l̄	e	ai	o	au	
क	ख	ग	घ	ङ	च	छ	ज	झ	ञ	ट	ठ	ड	ढ	
ka	kha	ga	gha	ṅa	ca	cha	ja	jha	ña	ṭa	ṭha	ḍa	ḍha	ṇa
त	थ	द	ध	न	प	फ	ब	भ	म					
ta	tha	da	dha	na	pa	pha	ba	bha	ma					
य	र	ल	व	श	ष	स	ह	ळ	क्ष					
ya	ra	la	wa	śa	ṣa	sa	ha	ḷa	kṣa					

*Descendant of Brahmi and ancestor of Devnagiri script

*Mainly used by Shingon Buddhists 真言宗 in Japan for Sanskrit mantras/sutras

* “Bonji 梵字” characters means “Indian” characters

*Introduced to Japan by Kukai 空海 in 806 C.E.

From <http://www.omniglot.com/writing/siddham.htm>

Acknowledgments:

Grateful acknowledgments to Mr. Kazuo Nakayama for his insights, expert translations of Japanese terms and websites, and for adding the Japanese characters in this presentation.

Primary Sources Used:

<http://www.onmarkproductions.com/html/buddhism.shtml>

**[http://www.esamskriti.com/html/
new_inside.asp?cat_name=cultphil&cid=541&sid=9007&count1=3](http://www.esamskriti.com/html/new_inside.asp?cat_name=cultphil&cid=541&sid=9007&count1=3)**

Helpful Readings (Not used):

<http://www.salagram.net/VWHChinaJapanKorea.html>

**Hindu Gods and Goddesses in Japan/Saroj Kumar Chaudhuri. New Delhi, Vedams, 2003, xviii, 184 p., ill., \$40. ISBN 81-7936-009-1.
<https://www.vedamsbooks.com/no30775.htm>**