

About Buddha Image

Hello, I am Kaneko, your navigator.

Rev Yugen Saito, head priest of Hagyu-ji temple, where he is giving a lecture, has the only underground sacred site in Japan. In the 110-meter underground passageway, there are 121 wooden sculptures of the principal images of the 33 sacred sites of the 33 Kannon temples in the western part of Japan and the 88 pilgrimage sites in the Shikoku region.

I will try to answer the "question of Buddhist statues" that he has displayed for many years.

What are "Jizo-san" and "Fudo-san"? What is "Teishaku-ten" in Tora-san movies, "Kongo-rikishi" seen in large temples, and "Benten-sama", one of the seven gods of good fortune?

There were many questions. Can you answer them?

After reading a number of Buddhist books, I realized that it is necessary to first grasp the Buddhist worldview.

It can be called the composition of God and Buddha, but I will try to explain it because I think it will help you understand Buddhism.

After the Buddha's death, as Buddhism became a teaching organization, various theories were added.

Based on the ancient Indian idea of "reincarnation," the "other world" was subdivided to the so-called hierarchy, or pyramid-shaped hierarchy.

It is very important to note here that this hierarchy is not what the Buddha wanted. For the Buddha, who taught "karma," it must have been an unacceptable idea and form.

However, when we look at Buddhism in general, there are many things that cannot be understood without this worldview. Please keep in mind that this is what the traditional Buddhist worldview is all about.

The world in Buddhism is broadly divided into the "world of the six realms of reincarnation.

The Buddhist world is the world of the Pure Land of Buddha, or heaven as it is called in Buddhist thought, and is a world that can be attained by breaking free from the Six Realms. In this world, there are Tathagata and Bodhisattvas.

A nyorai is a person who has realized the truth, in the image of Shakyamuni Buddha.

Bodhisattvas" are those who are practicing to become Buddha, and at the same time, they have the mission to save many people.

The "Six Realms" are the six realms of reincarnation after death as taught by Buddhism: the Way of Heaven, the Way of Humanity, the Way of Shura, the Way of Damnation, the Way of the Hungry Demons, and the Way of Hell.

Reincarnation" is the idea that after death, one is reborn in another life through the circumambulations.

Although it is a humanitarian concept, it is believed that one's deeds during one's life determine which life one will be reborn into, and depending on the severity of one's sins, one is reincarnated into the animal, hungry demon, or hell paths, where one suffers.

The highest of the six realms, the Heavenly Way, is the suffering-free world inhabited by the Brahman gods. However, even in the Heavenly Way, life is limited, and after death there is the possibility of rebirth in another world. You may question the appearance of Brahman gods, but there was a fusion with the indigenous Indian religions that preceded Buddhism.

The only way to be liberated from such suffering of reincarnation is to believe in Buddhism and attain enlightenment, and this liberation is called "Gedatsu" (liberation). Those who have attained liberation are guided by Tathagata to the Buddhist world, also known as the Pure Land. By the way, since it is difficult to

attain liberation by oneself, bodhisattvas are supposed to travel the six roads to save those who suffer.

Let me rearrange this once again. First of all, the Buddhist universe is divided into two major realms: the "Buddhist world" and the "Six Realms."

In the upper "Buddhist world," there are "Nyorai" and "Bodhisattvas."

The lower "Six Realms" are the six worlds where human beings are reborn after death: the way of heavenly, the way of humane, the way of Shura, the way of animal, the way of hungry demon, and the way of hell. And the Bodhisattvas in the Buddhist world are responsible for saving human beings who suffer in the six realms.

This composition was not originally intended by the Buddha, but is the worldview of modern Buddhism, which was shaped as Buddhism developed, incorporating ideas from Brahmanism and other religions.

Tomorrow I will continue discussing the four groups of Buddha images.

The Buddhist sermon series was given by Hirokazu Kaneko. Translation and voice in English by Hirokazu Kosaka.