

Notebook Slide 31

[Condensed Visual Classroom Guide to Daikokuten Iconography in Japan.](#)

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- [Louis Frédéric \(p. 238-239\)](#) and [Karen M. Gerhart \(p. 76\)](#) both state that monk Tenkai 天海 (d. 1643) invented Japan's grouping of the seven gods of fortune.
- Says the [Flammarion Iconographic Guide](#) <pp. 239 -238>: "This popular group of deities recalls 'the seven wise men of the bamboo thicket' or the 'seven wise men of the wine cup' whose images are popular in China. [The Japanese group] was artificially created in the 17th century by the monk Tenkai 天海 (who died in 1643 and was posthumously named Jigen Daishi 慈眼大師), who wanted to symbolize the essential virtues of the man of his time for the Shōgun Tokugawa Iemitsu 徳川家光 (1623-1650 AD)."
- However, art historian [Patricia Graham, p. 112](#) says: "Twentieth-century sources credit the priest Tenkai, Ieyasu's advisor, with concocting the grouping for the edification of the third shogun, Tokugawa Iemitsu. These sources explain that Tenkai identified the individual gods with seven virtues (longevity, fortune, popularity, candor, amiability, dignity, magnanimity) that kings impart to their subjects if they [the kings] follow the teachings of the Sutra of the Benevolent Kings (Ninnō-kyō 仁王經). However, Tenkai's known writings and Rinnōji Temple 輪王寺 records make no mention of the Seven Gods."
- [On page 291, Graham writes:](#) "Curators of Rinnōji's treasure house museum and priests at Rinnōji Temple know the anecdote [about Tenkai] and have searched temple records for verification of the story but have found no documentation of this claim (based on personal conversations during a visit to Rinnōji in October 2004)."
- Kida Teikichi 喜田貞吉, in his 1976 book [Fukujin](#) 福神, disputes the Tenkai origin of Japan's Seven Gods of Fortune. See pages 78-79.