

Statues of Two Heavenly Kings (Main Hall, Chojuji Temple)

Sculptures of the deities Tamonten and Zochoten flank statues of the Amida and Shakyamuni Buddhas on the dais in the temple's Main Hall. They are two of the Four Heavenly Kings (Shitenno), each of whom watches over one of the four cardinal directions. When displayed in pairs, they are referred to collectively as Niten. The statues are thought to date to the Heian period (794–1185).

The guardian of the north, Tamonten, is placed front-right of the Shakyamuni Buddha. The figure is clad in armor, with a halberd in the right hand and a miniature pagoda signifying the spiritual riches of Buddhism in the left. When worshipped independently, Tamonten is known as Bishamonten.

Zochoten, the protector of the south, is displayed front-left of the Amida Buddha. Like Tamonten, Zochoten is also portrayed wearing armor and holding a halberd. The right hand clasps a three-pronged *vajra*, the ritual implement that represents the indestructibility of Buddhist law and its power over evil.