

Anonymous
Apsaras (Pair of Celestial Musicians)

Japan, Nara period, ca. 8th century
Wood, gesso, paint

Bequest of John Gregg Allerton, 1991
(6091.1, 6091.2)

Anonymous
Pair of Phoenixes

Japan, Nara period (646-794)
Wood, polychrome

Gift of John Gregg Allerton, 1991
(6092.1, 6092.2)

Anonymous Phoenix Tile

Japan, Nara period (646-794)
Stone

Gift of Anonymous Donor, 1965
(3356.1)

Anonymous Mirror

Japan, Tumulus period, ca. 600 A.D.
Bronze

Gift of Donald H. Graham, Jr., 1996
(8488.1)

Anonymous

Figure of Kannon

Japan, early Nara period (645-710)

Bronze

Wilhelmina Tenney Memorial Fund, 1955
(2115.1)

Kannon (Sk: Avalokiteshvara), the Bodhisattva of Compassion, is one of the most widely worshiped divinities in Japan. The bodhisattvas are beings who delay their own enlightenment in order to assist others. As seen in this sculpture, a bodhisattva image is traditionally intended to resemble an Indian prince with hair piled in a tall topknot, wearing long scarves and heavily decorative accessories. The crown of this statue presumably displays the small image of Amida that identifies the deity as Kannon.

This work is representative of the early Nara period, also known as the Hakuho period (645-710), sculpture strongly influenced by the idealized realism of China's early Tang dynasty (618-906), with naturally round torso, slight attenuation at the waist, childlike expression, and the contrapposto pose with one hip raised and torso slightly tilted.