

## **Benten**

Benten, the Goddess of the sea, is also one of the Seven Divinities of Luck; and she is romantically referred to as the Goddess of Love, Beauty, and Eloquence. She is represented in Japanese art as riding on a dragon or serpent, which may account for the fact that in certain localities snakes are regarded as being sacred. Images of Benten depict her as having eight arms. Six hands are extended above her head and hold a bow, arrow, wheel, sword, key, and sacred jewel, while her two remaining hands are reverently crossed in prayer. She resembles Kwannon in many ways and images of the two goddesses are frequently seen together, but the shrines of Benten are usually to be found on islands.

Myths and Legends of Japan  
F. Hadland Davis

Benzaiten (Benten) is a female deity associated with the accumulation of worldly goods and is also considered a patroness of music and art. She frequently appears holding a biwa lute. Because of her original association with water she is linked to animals such as the dragon and snake and to the Buddhist temple at Enoshima Island.

Symbols of Japan  
Merrily Baird