

ON THE IMAGE OF DAIITOKU MYŌ-Ō (SKT. YAMANTAKA)
IN THE COLLECTION OF THE NARA NATIONAL MUSEUM:
THE ICONOGRAPHY OF DAIITOKU MYŌ-Ō WITH GORINTO STUPA

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An image of Daiitoku myō-ō (Skt. Yamantaka-vidya-rajā) was recently added to the collection of the Nara National Museum in the fiscal year of Heisei 16 (2004). This painting is not only important as a rare solo image of Daiitoku myō-ō, whose production date can be traced back to the Kamakura period (1192–1333), but its composition is also unique. In this essay I introduce briefly the iconography and to attempt to illuminate the background of the Buddhist faith concealed behind this painting.

I observed that the image of Daiitoku myō-ō as depicted as an incarnation of Amida (Skt. Amitabha-buddha); the gorinto (stupa comprising the five great elements) reflects strong admiration for Amida's pure land by some esoteric Buddhists. I then revealed the influence of the painting "Two Rivers and a White Path," depicting aspirants to Amida's pure land, in the representation of the background of Daiitoku myō-ō and *gorinto*. With regard to this feature, I believe this painting reflects the faith for Amida's pure land inherited from the generations of esoteric Buddhists centering around Mt. Koya.

I assumed that the production date of this painting the early half of the fourteenth century (late Kamakura to early Nambokucho period) because of the painting techniques used. As a result, I confirmed the possibility of a direct connection between this painting and the oral transmission of the secret teachings of Priest Ryozen (1258–1341), some of which were quoted in the book of ritual aspects of esoteric Buddhism, *Byakuho Kusho* (lit. Selection of Oral Transmission of White Treasures) compiled in the same period as this painting.

I could not find any painting of this type equal to the Nara National Museum image in artistic quality, since it is small in size, I speculate that this painting was produced for some high-ranking monk as his personal guardian deity. Through the discovery of this painting, I found that the *gorinto* stupa and the painting "Two Rivers and a White Path," which had been examined individually in the past, were important visual resources in the history of esoteric Buddhist art in medieval Japan, far more than I expected. In my future studies of this subject I hope to place this painting, with its unique construction and religious background, more precisely in the history of Buddhist painting in Japan.