RELIQUARIES USED IN THE KINRIN BUTCHŌ-HŌ RITUAL

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The Ono Branch (J., Onoryū) of the Shingon Sect of Esoteric Buddhism, based at the Kyoto temples of Daigo-ji and Kajū-ji, was the center of activity for relic (J., shari) and wish-granting-jewel (J., hōju) rituals in the Heian (794–1185) and Kamakura (1185–1333) periods. The branch comprised two parts, each made up of three sub-branches. Within the dominant three Daigo sub-branches (J., Daigo Sanryū), it was common for relics and wish-granting jewels to be regarded as the same thing, with relics being worshiped as wish-granting jewels in wish-granting-jewel rituals. In contrast, the three Ono sub-branches (J., Ono Sanryū), based at Kanju-ji, had the more unusual view that relics and wish-granting jewels are different entities. They saw relics as being manifestations of the Sanskrit letter symbolizing the buddha Kinrin Butcho (or Ichiji Kinrin), as described in the sutra Dai darani mappōchū ichiji shinju kyō (Ch., Ta tuoluoni mofazhong yizi xinzhou jin), with the power to save sentient beings. Accordingly, the most important ritual for the three Ono sub-branches was the Kinrin Butchō-hō, in which the main icons of worship were paintings of Kinrin Butcho.

This article proposes that the Nara National Museum’s Shrine with Reliquary and Ornamentation of a Stupa for the Hōkyōin darani (Karanda mudra dharani) (Kamakura period), the Nezu Institute of Fine Arts’ Dainichi Kinrin (Mahavairocana of the Golden Wheel) (Kamakura–Muromachi period), and Kairyū-ji’s Reliquary in the Shape of a Flaming Wish-Granting Jewel (Kamakura period) were used in the relic rituals of the three Ono sub-branches and discusses the distinctive characteristics of each.

Though few extant objects can be associated with the three Ono sub-branches, they are unique within the body of works used to ornament and glorify Buddhist relics. Such pieces bespeak the diversity of Japanese relic worship in Kamakura period.