ON THE STATUE OF AMIDA NYORAI AT THE SHÔCHI-IN ON KÔYASAN

IWATA Shigeki
Nara National Museum

The statute of Amida Nyorai (Sks., Amitâbha Tathâgata) addressed in this article is the main worship object of the Sho¯chi-in on Kôyasan. This life-sized seated figure forms the raigô-in, the mudra of welcome, with its hands; and judging from the taut cheeks of the masculine face, its weighty rugged physique, the reverse V shape of the curls on the back of the head, the style of the raised-base concealing the base of the statue, it is within the tradition of the Kei-ha school of the Kamakura period and partakes strongly of the style of Unkei. Among the works whose production Unkei, a sculptor representative of the Kamakura period, is thought to have been involved with, that which appears closest to the main worship object at the Shôchi-in is a set of statues of Shôkannon (Ärya-avalokitesvara), Bonten (Brahma), and Taishakuten (Indra) at Takisan-ji in Aichi Prefecture. The Taishakuten is particularly close. The trinity at Takisan-ji was produced by Unkei and his first son Tankei and is thought to have been completed in the third year of the Shôji era (1201). It is thus also possible to regard the Shôchi-in Amida as a work of the Unkei school circa 1200. Given that Unkei’s earliest work, the Dainichi Nyorai at Enjô-ji in Nara, is the sole exception to his practice of using crystal inlaid eyes in statues of bodhisattvas and buddhas, it is probably reasonable to assume that the sculptor of this statue, which does have inlaid crystal eyes, was likely an influential sculptor in the atelier of Unkei, someone such as Tankei.