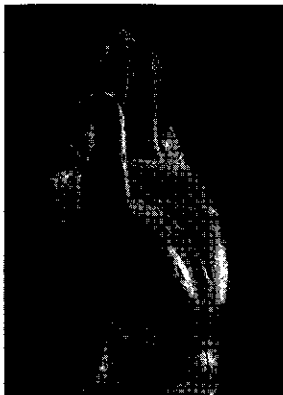


Explamation of the cover illustration

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Explanation of the Cover



The Hands of a Statue of a Tathāgata (left) and of a Deva (right)

Heian Period (tenth century) (left) and Kamakura Period (thirteenth century) (right)
 Height 21.6 cm (left) and 12.1 cm (right) Nara National Museum
 Photograph by Maki Naomi

The two photographs on the cover are respectively of the hands of Buddhist images which were made roughly 1,000 and 700 years ago.

The first hand on the cover when looked at closely it appears to become webbing between the gaps in the fingers are connected by only a thin membrane. This expression is called toes and fingers finely webbed (manmōsō) which is one of the thirty-two bodily characteristics of Shakamuni Buddha. Consequently this hand is understood as the left hand of Tathāgata a manifestation of Shakamuni Buddha. Further one part the hand's back covering is flat and so is the left hand which is above the left knee of a seated Nyorai statue. Moreover, from this posture connected with the Nyorai's hand is understood as indicating varada-mudra which is fulfillment for human beings.

The raw material is Japanese nutmeg (*Torreya nucifera*) with a base coat of black lacquer on which is applied gold foil. The source of the gleaming and huge Nyorai statue is probably the gold color. The plump plam and wrist, expressed with the single fold which can be thought of as child's hand, are indicative of the typical technique used to express the hand of Buddha during the first half of the Heian period.

The powerfully clenched right hand of the reverse side is Japanese cypress (*Chamaecyparis obtusa*) with the base coat made of a black lacquer, with an second layer of kaolin, upon which is painted vermilion. Naturally this statue's body is red and, moreover, it is conjectured that from the prominence of the knuckles in the presentation of the five fingers the statue is neither a Nyorai nor a Bohdisattva, but rather the protecting Deva of Buddhism, a temple, or a believer etc. Looking at the red body color it is believed that it is probably the right hand of one of the Four Guardian Kings, either Dhrtarastra or Viirūdhaka. It is thought that this hand held the hilt of a sword. Besides this realism is of a powerfully brawny model which is indicative of the typical technique used in part of Buddhist imagery during the initial part of the Kamakura period.