

# Presence and Performance: Devotional Images of Shaka and His Sacred Body in Medieval Nara

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15:30–17:00

Room 6019

Kanagawa University, Minatomirai Campus

**Abstract:** The Kamakura period (1185–1333) witnessed a renewed interest in Shaka (Sk. Śākyamuni), which was particularly prominent among a group of monks associated with the religious communities of Nara. These monks regarded Shaka not merely as a sage of the distant past, but also as a savior actively present in this world. Their understanding of the Buddha drew on the *Hikekyō* (*Compassionate Flower Sutra*), which gained currency in the twelfth century. Scholars have often interpreted this devotion to Shaka as a reaction against the widespread belief in Amida, an argument largely grounded in textual sources. This presentation takes a different approach by examining visual representations of Shaka, including carved icons, painted nirvana scenes, and relics or reliquaries, particularly those associated with the monk Jōkei (1155–1203) and his broader social circle. Born from the Southern branch of the Fujiwara clan, Jōkei entered Kōfukuji at a young age and was among the religious leaders who revived Shaka worship in the twelfth century. This talk investigates the relationship between these visual representations and the vision of Shaka articulated in the *Hikekyō* and Jōkei's teachings. I argue that these images and objects made the Buddha's body present and performative, enabling devotees to envision his existence across multiple spatial and temporal realms. Furthermore, they reveal a new devotional program in which the image of Shaka was integrated with that of Amida, not in opposition but in a complementary relationship that reflected the pluralistic soteriology embraced by clerics in Nara at the time.



Standing Shaka Buddha by Kaikei, ca. 1210. Wood with gold and cut gold leaf. H. 81.8 cm. Kimbell Art Museum.

## To Attend in Person:

Preregistration via the adjacent QR code at least a day in advance for those coming in person from outside the KU community is greatly appreciated. If you are coming from off campus, please also register as a Guest at the Information counter near the entrance before coming up to the room.

ご来場の方：神奈川大学関係者は事前登録不要です。学外の方は前日までに QR コードにて事前登録をお願いします。当日は 1F の Information カウンターで Guest 登録を済ましてから、部屋までお越しください。

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