

## **Buddhist short surplice (*rakusu*)**

Japan

Shōwa period (1926–89)

1950s

Patchwork silk brocade with ivory ring

Gift of Ulrich and Sarah Straus, in memory of H. Alexander Straus,  
1998/1.144

A *rakusu*—a piece of cloth worn around the neck in a ritual context—symbolizes the robes of the historical Buddha, which he is said to have made from gathered rags after abandoning his royal life for the path towards enlightenment. From the intimate process of creating them to their life as worn ritual garments, touch is an integral part of *rakusu*. Following in the footsteps of the historical Buddha, practitioners of Zen Buddhism hand-stitch the pieces together over the time leading up to their ordination. This exhibits both their dedication to Buddhist practice and to the Zen belief in finding insight and potentially enlightenment in the mundane, repetitive actions of daily life, many of which involve touch.

Ordained monks most commonly wear brown and black *rakusu*. Lay practitioners wear *rakusu* in blue or varied fabric, like the one seen here. It was gifted in the 1950s to a lay person by a monk from Daitoku-ji temple in Kyoto and would have been worn over a kimono.

## **Male kimono with undergarment and *heko obi***

Japan

Taishō period (1912–26)

Early 20th century

Silk

Gift of Victor and Pat Munoz, 2009/2.102.1, 3, 5

*Please touch this sample of hand-stitched silk brocade.*

**SILK 8.875" W x 1.5" H**

## **Taima temple mandala: *Amida Welcomes Chūjōhime to the Western Paradise***

Japan

Muromachi period (1336–1573)

16th century

Hanging scroll, ink, color, and gold on silk

Museum purchase made possible by

the Margaret Watson Parker Art

Collection Fund, 2002/1.169

This hanging scroll depicts Taima Temple in Katsuragi, outside Nara, Japan. Established in the seventh century, the temple remains an important pilgrimage site partly because of a famous tapestry that depicts the Western Paradise of Amida Buddha (the Buddha of Immeasurable Light), a heavenly realm into which one could be born after death. In UMMA's painting of this subject, Amida and his retinue are descending to greet Chūjōhime (an eighth-century aristocrat who became a Buddhist nun), seen under a canopied structure directly below the divine retinue, and carry her back to the Western Paradise. This painting may have been used for Amida Buddha visualization practices, engaging the mind by encouraging close looking at the image and later revisualization of it.



Almost as early as Buddhism was introduced to Japan in the seventh century, monks, nuns, and lay people used visualization and other techniques to create personal connections (*kechien*) with specific Buddhas or Buddhist divinities. In the Heian (794–1185) and Kamakura (1185–1333) periods, worship of Amida Buddha increased, especially in deathbed practices. By visualizing the descent of Amida and his retinue, one could pray for such an occurrence upon death. Paintings like this could be used to aid in these visualizations.

**Look at the central Buddha with his golden body seated on a lotus pedestal surrounded by his retinue. Imagine that this heavenly group has descended to guide you to the Western Paradise.**



Traveling monks promoted pilgrimage to certain sites through mandalas (diagrammatic depictions of temples) that depict their histories, grounds, and deities. UMMA's mandala illustrates buildings at Taima Temple to make it both clear and concrete that miraculous, salvific events could occur at the temple site. Decoding this complex image would also have encouraged the practitioner to pay close attention to it.

## Pair of prayer bells (*lontjeng*)

Indonesia

16th–17th century

Bronze

Museum purchase, 1957/2.53&54

The Buddhist prayer bell engages multiple senses—sight, sound, touch, and thought. This pair of bells is from Indonesia, where they were used in the worship of the bodhisattva Prajñāpāramitā, but bells of this type were also used in Japan to invoke deities during a ritual or to call devotees to prayer.

The sound of such a bell ringing is considered auspicious and akin to the voice of the Buddha. Buddhist laypersons might have responded to it as if the Buddha were calling them to come for meditation and prayer. Advanced monks who rang the bell, feeling its weight and detailed design in their hand, might have been reminded of the teachings it symbolizes. The top of the handle is a five-pronged *vajra*, which means both thunderbolt and diamond in Sanskrit. A common symbol in Buddhist art, the *vajra* can suggest both the experience of Buddhist enlightenment, which can strike like a thunderbolt, and its indestructibility, since diamonds are harder than other gemstones.

*Please touch this bronze sample.*

Fabricated at University of Michigan's Penny W. Stamps School of Art & Design Sculpture Studio

**BRONZE 8.875" W x 1.5" H**

*Please carefully touch this 3D print of one of  
UMMA's prayer bells on display in this gallery.*

3D modeling and 3D print created at the University of Michigan 3D Lab

**3D BELL 8.875" W x 1.5" H**

**PRINT 2 - ONE FOR EACH SIDE OF PLATFORM/CASE**

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## **Incense in Buddhism**

Scent adds another layer to the multisensory experience of Buddhist practice. Fragrant woods are valued for sculpture. Flowers and fruit are considered desirable offerings to deities in part because of their pleasing aromas. And incense is almost always burning on the altar, providing Buddhist followers with an opportunity to gain merit (which helps the believer to be born with a higher spiritual status in the next life, and, ideally, to achieve enlightenment during that life) or answers to prayers.

Incense was also used as a meditational aid—scents such as sandalwood or cloves are thought to relieve stress and increase focus and awareness—all beneficial for efficient meditation and believed to purify the mind and body. On a more complex level, incense can represent the Buddhist concept of life's fleeting nature: the scent rises into the air and dissolves quickly—a short existence mirroring our own.

*Please take a scent card.*

**4" W x 1.5" H**

## **Ritual censor (*egōro*)**

Japan

Momoyama period (1583–1615) to Edo period (1615–1868)  
1583–1650

Gilt bronze with semiprecious stones

Museum purchase made possible by the  
Margaret Watson Parker Art Collection Fund, 2007/2.6

Like many Buddhist practices, incense use extended into other Japanese traditions. This gilt bronze ritual censor, for example, was used for the worship of kami (indigenous deities of Japan), in the practice of what is often called Shinto today. It was also used as a vessel for offerings to deities and as a marker of monastic status and authority—in rituals, censors like this were held by the chief priest.

**Horizontal Tombstone to affix to front of wall case 12.875" W x 3.875" H**

## **Lion-form incense burner**

Japan

Edo period (1615–1868)

19th century

Stoneware with glaze

Gift of Ann Holmes, 2013/1.331A&B

This lion-form incense burner would have exhaled fragrant smoke. Though it was not used in Buddhist practice, its form hints at a Buddhist origin. In Buddhism, the lion represents the historical Buddha and enlightenment, among other things.

**Horizontal Tombstone to affix to front of wall case 7.5" W x 3.875" H**

## **Blue-and-white square incense burner**

China

Qing dynasty (1644–1912)

1844

Porcelain with blue underglaze painting

Museum purchase made possible by the

Margaret Watson Parker Art Collection Fund, 1985/2.47

### *Inscription:*

May the incense and candles [burning at this temple] be prosperous and flourishing the 23rd year of Emperor Tao-kuang [1844]

## **Incense burner**

China

Ming dynasty (1368–1644)

15th century

Stoneware with glaze

Gift of Domino's Pizza, Inc., 1993/1.108

In temples, vessels for incense offerings generally have a wide mouth and a fairly straight body, as seen in these two ceramic works. While they are Chinese, they resemble the types of containers found in Japan. Buddhist items from China often found their way to Japan through traveling monks, commerce, and collecting, and their forms sometimes served as models for Japanese wares.

**Horizontal Tombstone to affix to front of wall case 15.875" W x 3.875" H**

## Tea and Buddhism

Perhaps the most well-known incorporation of the sense of taste within Buddhism is through tea, which was brought by monks from China to Japan in the ninth century. Valued for its medicinal and stimulating qualities, tea was used daily by monks to aid in a lifestyle that combined physical activity, intellectual expansion, and contemplation. In the medieval period (1185–1603), the use of tea was cultivated into a refined and spiritual practice in its own right. The basic format of what is commonly called the tea ceremony—developed in the sixteenth century under the famous master Sen no Rikyū (1522–1591)—requires paying meticulous attention to all aspects of a carefully orchestrated environment: the sight of flower arrangements and calligraphy; the sound of water boiling; the warmth of the tea bowl; the smell and taste of the tea.

Together the two tea bowls in this case provide a snapshot of the history of tea in Japan, including its origins in China.

## **Tea bowl**

China

Northern Song dynasty (960–1127)

Porcellaneous stoneware with glaze

Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Paul W. Wang in memory of Professor Shang-Yi Wang,  
1982/1.274

The elegant shape and delicate incised design of this white ware, imported from China to Japan, would have been enjoyed by aristocrats and Buddhist monks.

**Tombstone to affix to front of wall case 6.875" W x 3.875" H**

## **Raku Tan'yū**

Japanese, 1795–1854

Red raku ware tea bowl  
with imprinted leaf designs

Edo period (1615–1868)

1820–40

Earthenware with red and gray glaze

Bequest of Margaret Watson Parker, 1954/1.537

The cultivated rusticity of this tea bowl illustrates the shifts that tea practice underwent in Japan, where it was promoted by Zen Buddhists.

***Imagine what it would be like to touch this tea bowl's deliberately uneven surfaces when filled with hot tea.***

*Please touch this glazed porcelain sample.*

Fabricated by Angela de Leon, ceramic student in University  
of Michigan's Penny W. Stamps School of Art & Design

**PORCELAIN 8.875" W x 1.5" H**

# **Selections from *Buddhist Chanting in Japanese Temples***

Running time 28 min. 52 sec.

© 1980 Albatros.

Sound is an inescapable part of Buddhist experience for all levels of practitioners. In their efforts to progress on the Buddhist path, laymen listen to monks preach the Buddhist teachings. Laymen and advanced monks alike hear or participate in the chanting of sutras (Buddhist scripture), which is one way to gain merit, which helps the believer to be born with a higher spiritual status in the next life. The sound of different types of bells ringing can pierce the awareness of a Buddhist devotee, calling forth a divine presence, marking time for a chant, or bringing focus to the mind in preparation for meditation.

***This recording provides examples of various sounds in Japanese Buddhist experience. Listen for temple monks chanting sutras accompanied by bells and drums, and female pilgrims singing a hymn to Buddha.***

**Chanting of Morning Services by Yamabushi of the Shuken sect:  
Hokesampo Sutra, Hannyashingo, Kito** (by the Monks of Shogoin Palace)

**Goeika: Waka** (in the Myoshinji Temple)  
(by the Women Pilgrims of Ishikawa)

**Shomyo Chant in the Tendai Sect** (by the Monks of Enryaku Temple)

**Zen Solo Chants: Daishindarani, Prayer to Avalokitesvara**  
(by the Monks of Myoshinji Temple)

**Sutra Chanting by Zen Rinzai Sect: Okekyo No. 25,  
Daihishu, Shikuseigan** (by the Monks of Myoshinji Temple)