

Techniques of Coloring on the National Treasure Jūichimen Kannon

TANIGUCHI Kosei
Nara National Museum

The techniques of representation used in the Jūichimen Kannon in the collection of the Nara National Museum, which has been designated a National Treasure, have previously been carefully considered in the studies of Yanagisawa Taka and Hayashi On. However, now with the use of high-resolution digital photography, it has become possible in our joint research to ascertain previously difficult to observe aspects such as the manner pigments have been overlaid at level of a single droplet or the condition of the paint applied to the reverse of the silk. Furthermore, through the use of X-ray fluorescence analysis, the composition of the pigments used in this painting can be identified down to the elemental level in many cases. In this article, I chiefly describe the techniques used in coloring and the design of this work based on a pains-taking examination of the painting itself supplemented by a consideration of the latest data obtained through spectrographic analysis done in the joint study. Because the goal of this article is to describe the work in terms of data that can be obtained with the naked eye, I have attempted to avoid to the greatest degree possible descriptions that rely on technical names of colors when addressing the issue of color, and have based the descriptions on everyday, layman's terminology. Nonetheless, in those places where it has been necessary to describe the colors that have been identified.

(translated by Michael Jamentz)