

### **Itsukushima Shrine: Box for Heike Nokyo**

The set of ornamental sutra scrolls known as the *Heike Nokyo* was donated to Itsukushima Shrine in 1164 by the Taira clan, led by Taira no Kiyomori (1118–1181). The 33 scrolls that comprise the set were contained in a rectangular, three-layered box with a platform-like base. Made of copper patinated to achieve a lacquer-like, deep brown color, the box is almost as elaborately decorated as its contents. The slightly convex lid features a round image of dragons fashioned out of gold and clouds made of silver. The dragons are portrayed paying their respects in front of a *gorinto* (five-tiered stupa), a type of Buddhist pagoda. On the sides, a total of eight golden dragons are depicted in flight, each holding a kind of wish-fulfilling jewel that appears regularly in Buddhist imagery. The generous use of precious metals on the box conveys the wealth and power of Kiyomori's Taira clan, while the dragons and Buddhist themes express their beliefs. The box displayed here is a 1925 reproduction. The original is a designated National Treasure and is only exhibited on special occasions.