

## **Portrait of Retired Emperor Goshirakawa**

This realistic portrait of Retired Emperor Goshirakawa (1127–1192) shows him as a Buddhist monk, as he took the tonsure after his abdication. He wears a monk's robe and surplice and holds prayer beads in one hand and a sutra scroll in the other. The finely rendered natural scenery on the sliding doors in the background is thought to reflect the influence of the Chinese paintings that had recently begun to be imported to Japan at the time.

The portrait is one of the few early images of Goshirakawa and is designated an Important Cultural Property. It was painted on silk during the Kamakura period (1185–1332). Despite being identified as Goshirakawa, this painting closely resembles a portrait of his father, Emperor Toba (1103–1156), leading some to question whether, in fact, it depicts Goshirakawa.

Although Goshirakawa reigned for only three years, he acted as the *de facto* imperial ruler during segments of the reigns of five subsequent emperors. During his retirement, his base of operations was the vast palace-temple complex known as Hōjūjidonō which bordered Myōhōin.