

Daikokuten (Skt: Mahākāla)

Daikokuten is known as the god of food, farmers, prosperity, and wealth. Here, Daikokuten's thin slender and forbidding features reflect his original origins as the Indian war god called Mahākāla. This image deviates from the more common Japanese portrayals of Daikokuten, which are generally portly, carry a broad smile, stand on two bales of rice, and hold a small mallet and large treasure sack slung over the shoulder.

This statue measures 171 centimeters and is the oldest extant image of Daikokuten in Japan. It is a particularly tall rendition of the deity compared with many others. Despite its size, the figure seems rather small in the context of the Treasure House, overshadowed by larger, more imposing sculptures. This figure dates from the late Heian period (794–1185). The sculptor carved the image from a single block of camphor. It is considered noteworthy among Buddhist statues in Japan due to the unusual rendering of the subject. The amulet charms in front of the statue offer the owner protection against hunger.