

The Radish, Male/Female Sex Organs, & Manofica

**Bernard Faure, [Protectors and Predators](#)
University of Hawai'i Press, 2015
From Pages 53 and 54**

Toward the fourteenth century, with the rise of the merchant class, Daikokuten began to gain weight (literally) and to be depicted as standing on two big balls of rice, holding the mallet that “brings riches.” He also acquired strong sexual characteristics. In the *Byakuhō shō* 白宝鈔, for example, Chōen (1218–1278) reports an oral tradition to the effect that if a woman wishes to seduce a man, she must pray to Daikokuten. The *Mahāpratisarādhāraṇī-sūtra* (Ch. *Suiqiu tuoluoni jing* 隋求陀羅尼經), translated into Chinese by Amoghavajra (705–774), describes various rules and deities to be worshiped by women who desire a child. A pregnant woman, for instance, should make a drawing of Mahākāla. In his *Playful Essays* (*Kiyū shōran* 喜遊笑覽, 1830), Kitamura Nobuyo 喜多村信節 (1784–1856) explains that Makora (that is, Mahākāla) became a protector of children owing to his relations with Hārītī. At the Wakamiya 若宮 Shrine of Kasuga, Daikokuten (or rather Ōkuninushi) is worshiped today as part of a couple, together with Okame 亀 (aka Otafuku お多福, the popular version of the goddess Ame no Uzume 天宇受売). The shrine also sells votive wooden plaques (ema 絵馬) for female lactation, on which a female breast is crudely drawn. During the Edo period, Daikokuten was at times depicted as making a hand gesture with strong sexual connotations, the so-called **manofica** (from manus ‘hand’ and fica ‘fig’, a symbol of the female organ). An illustration on a fan, representing Daikokuten carrying a forked radish over his shoulders, clearly has a similar meaning. At Mount Haguro 羽黒 and elsewhere, Daikokuten is often plainly represented by a wooden phallus.

The vexing question of Daikokuten’s transformation from a bloodthirsty demon into a jolly good fellow and a god of fortune has been studied by Iyanaga and others. It is difficult to find any clear precedent for the popular image which Daikokuten came to assume in the medieval period: if not his black, dwarf-like, pot-bellied appearance, since the Tantric Mahākāla was sometimes represented as a stout fellow, then at least his attire (consisting of a layman’s dress and a strange hat) and demeanor (carrying a big bag on his left shoulder and holding a mallet in his right hand). Iyanaga has compared Daikokuten’s bag, a symbol of abundance, to that of the Chan monk Budai (J. Hotei 布袋), better known as the Laughing Buddha. The image of that trickster may indeed have influenced that of Daikokuten, but the motif of the bag could just as well be a distant iconographic echo of Mahākāla’s elephant skin. The bag has also been described as a symbol of the eighth consciousness (Skt. ālaya-vijñāna, J. arayashiki 阿頼耶識).

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Daikokuten’s mallet is usually described as a magic tool, a kind of cintāmaṇi; but it is also a magic weapon, used in connection with epidemics. In the Madarijin 摩怛哩神 ritual centered on the Seven Mothers (Skt. Śaptamātṛka, J. Shichimo 七母), the seven deities each hold a mallet, and this attribute is explained by their role as epidemic deities. Another interesting, albeit marginal and heterodox, aspect of the medieval cult of Daikokuten is an oral tradition regarding the so-called tsubute 礫, a term usually referring to “stone throwing.” In this case, however, the object thrown does not seem to be a stone, and the throwing does not constitute any kind of Buddhist intifada; rather, the goal is to steal the wealth from a rich house by throwing into it, at the hour of the rat (around midnight), a talisman in the form of a wish-fulfilling jewel dedicated to Daikokuten.

**Saroj Kumar Chaudhuri, [Hindu Gods and Goddesses in Japan](#)
Vedams eBooks (P) Ltd., 2003, From Pages 70 and 71**

In Japan, Mahākāla, somehow, acquired a sexual dimension also. The backside in some ceramic idols of Mahākāla had the appearance of a phallus. Prostitutes kept these idols on altars in their homes. Again, the right fist of some idols of Mahākāla, like that in the Hokkedō of the Tōdaiji Temple of Nara, shows the thumb held between the index finger and the middle finger. In Japan, this was treated as a symbolic representation of a female reproductive organ. During the Muromachi period, there arose a popular custom of offering radishes with two roots to Mahākāla. The two-root radish symbolically represented a naked woman with a smooth white complexion. People believed that such an offering satisfied the deity, who, in turn, bestowed happiness as a reward. The famous artist, Katsushika Hokusai (active 1804–1844), has left wood block prints of Mahākāla showing a two-root radish on his head. *Morisada Mankō* of Kitagawa Morisada, completed in 1853, says that Mahākāla is worshipped on the day of Kōshi, the day of the rat, every month. Two-root radishes are offered in Kyoto, Osaka and Edo, the present-day Tokyo. It may be mentioned here that this custom of offering two-root radishes to the deity survives even today in the countryside of Yamagata Prefecture. It is called the Marriage of Mahākāla. [Schumacher here: Chaudhuri footnotes the above passage, citing below Japanese text: Sasama Yoshihiko 笹間良彦, *Daikokuten Shinkō to Zokushin* 大黒天信仰俗信, Yūzankaku 雄山閣, Tokyo, 1993, page 48.]