



Yaksha General Anila

Date

First half of the 15th century

Medium

Pigments on cloth; embroidered textile mount

Description

This painting is part of a lavish set depicting each of the Fifty-One Deities of the Mandala of the Medicine Buddha, who is the focus of practices promoting health. It may have been commissioned for a special occasion to facilitate a patron's well-being. The corpulent orange deity Anila—Sanskrit for “Wind”—is one of the Twelve Yaksha Generals, protective guardians of the outer limits of the mandala. Decked in silks and jewelry, he holds a trident—a weapon and instrument of power—in his right hand and a mongoose spewing jewels that signify prosperity in his left. This painting reflects a distinct Tibetan style seen in China's early Ming Dynasty court ateliers, evident in the

fine gold detailing in Anila's red throne back, the scalloped lotus-flower seat, and the vivid blues, greens, and reds. Framed by an elaborate mount, the scrolling lotus motif with flower blossoms created by polychrome silk floss on a dark blue silk ground recalls the sophisticated styles of Chinese embroidery. The embroidered textile mount is further decorated with the Eight Auspicious Symbols above (left to right, top to bottom: dharma wheel, white conch, victory banner, parasol, lotus, golden fish, treasure vase, and endless knot) and the Seven Treasures of the Universal Monarch below (minister, jewel, queen, wheel, elephant, general, and horse). These symbols of Tibetan Buddhism appropriately complement the mandala of the Medicine Buddha and are typically evoked for healing purposes and general well-being.

Dimensions

18 3/8 × 6 3/8 × 3/8 in.