‘Hakutaku hi kai zu’ 白澤避怪圖 (White Marsh Diagram to Repel Ominous Prodigies)

Donald Harper

Ink on paper

56 X 34 cm

Painting of the spirit Hakutaku by Fukuhara Gogaku 福原五岳 (1730–1799)

Inscription dated 1785 by the monk Bansen 盤旋

Acquired by Dr. Carmen Blacker

The ‘Hakutaku hi kai zu’ by Fukuhara Gogaku and Bansen is the oldest of five extant Japanese examples of a diagram combining the image of Hakutaku (literal translation, White Marsh) with an inscription that identifies Hakutaku as a deity who protects people from being harmed by spirit-world prodigies. The inscription includes a lengthy quotation from a lost twelfth century Chinese work, *Sheshi lu* 涉世錄 (Record of Experiencing the World), that recommends hanging the picture of Hakutaku/Baize 白澤 inside the house to prevent misfortune. Magical uses of the image of Hakutaku are well documented in eighteenth and nineteenth century Japan, including as a protective amulet when traveling and for illness. During the 1858 cholera epidemic in Edo (modern Tokyo) people were told to protect themselves by setting the image of Hakutaku on their headrest before retiring at night.

Baize is first attested in China in the fourth century CE as the deity who revealed to Huangdi 黃帝 (Yellow Thearch) the identity of all the spirits, forming the basis for the medieval Chinese demonological text *Baize tu* 白澤圖 (Diagrams of White Marsh). The only extant example of the medieval Chinese *Baize tu* is an incomplete Dunhuang manuscript copied in the ninth or tenth century with the title *Baize jingguai tu* 白澤精怪圖 (White Marsh Diagrams of Spectral Prodigies), now in the Pelliot collection of Dunhuang manuscripts at the Bibliothèque nationale de France (P2682). A fragment from the same manuscript is in the Stein collection of Dunhuang manuscripts at the British Library (S6261). The Dunhuang manuscript does not have a drawing of Baize; the *tu* ‘diagrams’ referred to in its title are the drawings of the ‘spectral prodigies’.

gies.’ However, the custom of hanging a drawing of Baize in the house for protection from spirit-world harm—the drawing was also called Baize *tu* ‘diagram of (the deity) Baize’—is attested in ninth and tenth century Chinese sources. The ‘Hakutaku hikai zu’ reflects the adoption of this custom in Japan, perhaps as early as the ninth century.

The oldest drawing of Baize/Hakutaku is in the *Tiandi ruixiang zhi* 天地瑞祥志 (Treatise on the Auspicious Signs of Heaven and Earth), a work presumed to have been brought to Japan from China. The work is listed in a late-ninth century Japanese bibliography but is unknown in Chinese histories and bibliographies. The deity has an ox body and a human, bearded head. An account of Baize in a ninth or tenth century Chinese text, a Buddhist manuscript from Dunhuang now in St. Petersburg (Dh223), confirms the bovine image. The Hakutaku image painted by Fukuhara Gogaku has three faces, each face with three eyes and a pair of horns. This Hakutaku image had become standard in Japan by the eighteenth century. Its origin is unknown.