

Calligraphy

Shogunal Edicts and Temple Records

N-17-1: Edict by Ashikaga Takauji, et al.

This edict was issued by Ashikaga Takauji, the first shogun of the Muromachi period (1392–1573). Takauji's younger brother Tadayoshi defeated Nawa Nagatoshi in battle in 1336, forcing Takauji's rival Nitta Yoshisada to flee east. In anticipation of his victory, Takauji issued this edict a few weeks later to have Kō'onji Temple in Ikarugashō estate (in present-day Hyōgo Prefecture) pray for peace throughout the land. The edict bears the shogun's stylized signature. It was mounted as a handscroll along with other documents related to Kō'onji Temple.

N-17-2: Edict by Ashikaga Yoshimasa, et al.

The Muromachi government presented this edict to the Ikarugashō estate, a property of Hōryūji Temple in present-day Hyōgo Prefecture in 1458. The edict exempts the estate from taxes, provisional work allotment, and corvée labor, among other things. It includes the stylized signature of the shogun Ashikaga Yoshimasa. This scroll also contains documents related to Ashikaga Yoshitane from 1518.

N-23: Daily Records of Hōryūji Temple

This set's twelve volumes – one for each month – record the calendrical functions of Hōryūji Temple during the Nanbokuchō period (1333–1392). Events are written in chronological order. Details concerning each ceremony's purpose and history, as well as the temple properties in each province that funded it, are included as well. Seven volumes have colophons indicating they are copies brushed in 1449. The volume for the fourth month was copied in 1628.

Textiles

A Bejeweled Sash and Textiles Showcasing Different Techniques

The current exhibition features textiles made using a variety of materials and techniques, like *kumihimo* (cords made by interlacing threads in a repeated pattern), twill damask, plain-weave silk, and felt. Special focus is placed on a lavish *kumihimo* sash that is said to have belonged to Emperor Shōmu (701–756). The different shades and textures produced by each technique illustrate the rich variety of expressions that

were possible in early textiles.

N-49: Sash Fragments with Glass Beads and Pearls

Nara period, 8th century; Important Cultural Property

The colored yarns of this sash have been interlaced in a pattern comprised of intersecting diagonal lines that changes from darker to lighter tones. The sash purportedly belonged to Emperor Shōmu. Notably, pearl and glass beads of various colors are threaded directly onto the yarns. This feature is extremely unusual among extant *kumihimo*, with no similar examples known to exist even in the Shōsō-in Treasures. This suggests the sash was worn by a person of high social standing.

N-50-1: Fragment of Buddhist Ritual Banner (*Ban*) with Arrowheads

Asuka–Nara period, 7th–8th century; Important Cultural Property

This fragment was part of the upper section of a Buddhist ritual banner. It is made of interlaced yarns in multiple colors forming a braided cord with an arrowhead pattern. A similar pattern can be seen in a sash worn around Prince Shōtoku’s waist in a famous portrait now owned by the imperial family titled *Prince Shōtoku with Two Princes*.

N-319-14: Fragments of Buddhist Ritual Banner (*Ban*): “Banner Legs”

Asuka–Nara period, 7th–8th century

These fragments are all that remains of the lower part of a banner body and four narrow strips of cloth, often likened to “legs,” that hung from it. The dark red leg is made of silk twill and decorated with dotted circles enclosing a pair of birds facing each other, while the other legs are rendered in plain-weave silk of varying colors. Scholars believe that the original banner was designed to incorporate the five fundamental colors of Buddhism, and one can imagine the vivid appearance of this banner had when it was first made over a millennium ago.

N-319-34: Fragments of Buddhist Ritual Banner (*Ban*)

Asuka–Nara period, 7th–8th century

These fragments are the remains of the banner head, the lower part of the banner body, and the upper part of the banner legs of a silk ritual banner. Yellow banners were used in memorial services where participants prayed for the souls of the departed to attain enlightenment.

I-336-4: Gauze (*Ra*) with Small Flower Roundels

Nara period, 8th century

This textile fragment is an example of *ra* gauze. To make this type of gauze, warp threads are intertwined in a complex pattern, and weft threads are passed through the openings, creating a mesh-like fabric. This example has a delicate lattice-like pattern. It is decorated with a design of small round six-petaled flowers block-printed in gold and silver paint. Even though it is only a small fragment, the floral pattern gives it a unique charm.

I-336-93: Embroidery with Dragons

Asuka period, 7th century

This piece of plain-weave silk is woven into different-colored squares arranged horizontally. Within the squares, the ground colors and dragons are intricately embroidered in outline stitch. The slender, relatively short dragons standing on four legs closely resemble designs found in metalwork of the Kofun period (ca. 3rd–7th century). Together with the *Tenjukoku Paradise Embroidery*, National Treasure owned by Chūgūji Temple in Nara, the work is viewed as one of the oldest embroideries of its kind in Japan.

I-336-108: Rug with Flowers

Nara period, 8th century

This rug was made by compressing wool fibers in a process comparable to that used to produce modern felt. To make it, the wool was dyed different colors, matted, and then pressed together. Its white ground is decorated with flowers in indigo, blue, red, and light red. A few similar examples remain in the Shōsō-in Treasures, but this is the only floral felt rug passed down at Hōryūji Temple, making it an extremely valuable object.

N-319-52-2: Fragment of Buddhist Ritual Banner (*Ban*): "Banner Leg"

Asuka–Nara period, 7th–8th century

Plain-weave silk is the simplest fabric to produce, with the warp and weft yarns crossing one another in turn. The fabric was commonly used for banner legs. This example is dyed light indigo. Indigo dye can produce varying shades and textures depending on the dyeing method and number of immersion cycles.

N-319-115: Fragment of Buddhist Ritual Banner (*Ban*): "Banner Leg" with Alternating Checkered Pattern

N-319-117-1: Fragment of Buddhist Ritual Banner (*Ban*): "Banner Leg" with Checkered Pattern

Asuka–Nara period, 7th–8th century

Many banners passed down at Hōryūji Temple are made of silk twill. Twill refers to textiles woven by continuously crossing warp or weft yarns over the other in a set order. This example is an early type of twill damask, producing a checkered design with a twill-weave pattern on a plain-weave ground structure. It is fascinating to note how simply floating warp or weft threads at regular intervals diffuses the light in different ways, making a pattern come in and out of view depending on how the light reflects off of it.

N-319-116: Fragment of Buddhist Ritual Banner (*Ban*): "Banner Leg" with Paired Phoenixes, Vines and Beaded Roundels

Asuka–Nara period, 7th–8th century

Pairs of phoenixes facing each other are depicted inside beaded roundels surrounded by vines. The fabric is a type of twill damask often produced in the 7th century, with a twill-weave pattern on a plain-weave ground structure. The designs on twill damasks shifted over time from repeating geometric patterns, like chevrons and diamonds, to representational motifs like the ones seen here.