

Room Six: Painting

Four Sages on Mount Shang, and King Wen and Lu Shang

The painting on view, *Four Sages on Mount Shang, and King Wen and Lu Shang*, was originally displayed in the Relics Hall of the Eastern Precinct of Hōryūji Temple. It was mounted on sliding doors that encircled the Hall's altar on three sides: the west, north, and east. The Eastern Precinct, first built in the Tenpyō era (729–746), was reconstructed and altered a number of times over the centuries. It became a center for the worship of Prince Shotoku, an early supporter of Buddhism who oversaw the construction of Hōryūji Temple, with the Relics Hall being used to store objects related to the prince.

Researchers believe the painting on display was created in 1364, the year when the interior of the Relics Hall was refurbished and its shrine rebuilt. Later, in the Edo period (1603–1868), the painting was removed from the sliding doors on which it was mounted and attached to folding screens, taking on its present form.

N-4: *Four Sages of Mount Shang, and King Wen and Lu Shang*

The three screens on the left show King Wen and Lu Shang, while the three on the right portray the Four Sages on Mount Shang. Both compositions are based on Chinese stories about recluse-sages who were employed by kings to pacify the land, reflecting a reverence for Chinese culture in Japan and the wish for peace under wise rulers.

In each composition, individual scenes are laid out chronologically, proceeding from the left in a clockwise manner. The way in which these stories are portrayed is rather unusual when compared to other extant paintings of the same subject matter. Most importantly, this work is immensely valuable as one of the few sliding-door paintings remaining from the 14th century.

King Wen and Lu Shang (Important Cultural Property)

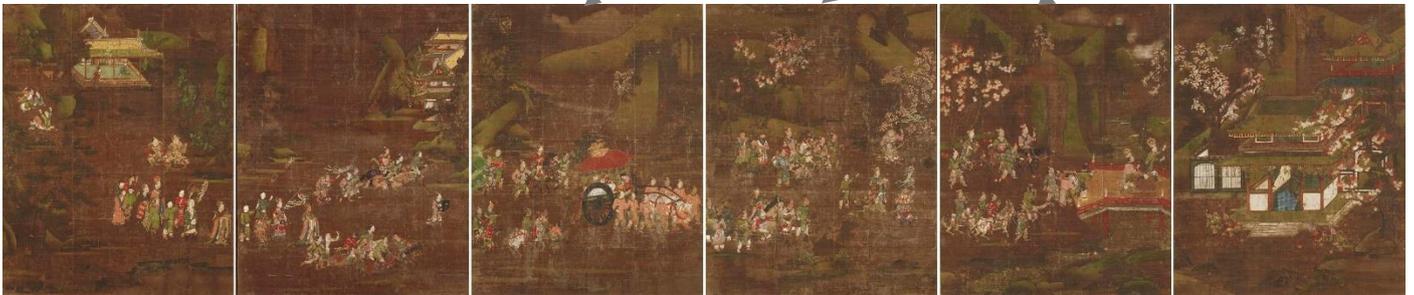
[重要文化財] 文王呂尚/[중요문화재] 문왕여상도

Current positions of the panels/ (现在的排列顺序) /현재 배열 순서



Original positions of the panels

(原先的排列顺序) /원래 배열 순서



Four Sages on Mount Shang (Important Cultural Property)

[重要文化財] 商山四皓图/[중요문화재] 상산사호도



Room 6: Textiles

Felt Rugs and Early Compound Weaves

This gallery is currently displaying ancient felt rugs and textiles with patterns made using early compound weave techniques. Visitors are invited to trace the development of these patterns from simple, abstract geometric designs to elaborate representational designs of birds, animals, and floral sprays.

N-54-5: Red Rug; Nara period, 8th century

This rug is made of an early type of felt that was produced by pressing wool fibers together. Such felt products are still used to this day by nomadic tribes in Mongolia and western Asia, indicating this rug was likely brought to Japan through trade with mainland Asia.

N-46-3-2: Cloth Fragment. With Triangles and Lozenges Design; Asuka period, 7th century

From around the 3rd century to the early 8th century, patterns were woven into fabrics mainly using a warp-faced compound weave.¹ Supplementary weft patterning was also used in some cases to make a design using additional horizontal threads, as seen in this cloth featuring a geometric pattern of diamonds and chevrons.

N-313-1: Textile Fragment with Linked Circles; Nara period, 8th century

Featuring an elaborate geometric pattern of interlocking circles, this textile was also woven in warp-faced compound weave. During this time period, warp-faced compound weaves were typically rendered in three colors, but this textile was woven in six colors, reflecting the exceptional skill of the weaver.

I-336-57: Cloth, With birds, wild animals and bead roundels design on red ground; Asuka-Nara period, 7th-8th century

From a distance, this textile may look like a simple striped cloth, but actually, about one-third of a large pearl roundel is visible. Similar roundels on other textiles suggest there was once a pair of animals facing each other in the main motif of this textile.

I-336-58: Cloth, With paired phoenixes and bead roundels design on brown ground; Asuka-Nara period, 7th-8th century

Woven in warp-faced compound weave, this fragment features a primary repeating motif of pearl roundels enclosing paired phoenixes surrounded by a floral spray. Between the roundels is a secondary repeating motif of a six-petal flower with four palmettes growing outwards in four directions around it.

I-336-59: Cloth, With small flowers and *meyui* motif in diagonal crosses design on brownish purple ground; Asuka-Nara period, 7th-8th century

This warp-faced compound weave textile features lines of small dots forming a lattice pattern around eight-petal flowers – each with a red or green center.

I-336-60: Cloth, With leaves design in a tortoiseshell pattern on brownish purple ground; Asuka-Nara period, 7th-8th century

The faint stripes that appear to run across this textile are a unique feature of warp-faced compound weave textiles, which use vertical warp threads that have been dyed in different colors to form the pattern. The design consists of four-petal floral motifs enclosed in a repeating framework of hexagons with small dots in their borders.

I-336-67: Cloth, With six-petal flowers and birds design on bluish green ground; Nara period, 8th century

This cloth's dense pattern of distinctly recognizable birds and flowers rendered using a warp-faced compound weave reflects the technical developments of textiles in the 8th century.

I-336-72; Cloth, With flowers design on yellow ground; Nara period, 8th century

In China, the late 6th to early 7th century saw a revolution in textile-production techniques, including the development of a weft-faced compound weave, utilizing the horizontal threads to make patterns, rather than the vertical threads. This technique enabled the weaver to freely change the color of the horizontal threads throughout the process allowing for larger and more varied designs. At the time of its creation, this textile reflected the latest patterns and techniques available.

¹Warp-Faced Compound Weave (*Tate-Nishik*)

An ancient technique to weave patterned cloth that was used from around the 3rd to early 8th century. To make a warp-faced compound weave, vertical threads (warp) of differing colors are arranged on the loom. The weaver then passes the horizontal thread (weft) under specific vertical threads to force the desired color to the surface of the cloth and make a design.