

Room Six: Calligraphy

The Sutras of Japan

N 14: *Butsumyō-kyō* (Sutra of the Buddhas' Names)

The *Sutra of the Buddhas' Names* preaches that if a person repents, their sins can be obliterated by the power of chanting the *nianfo* (*nenbutsu*) and remembering all the names of the buddhas. This version of the sutra is divided into three volumes — one for the past, present, and future — with each volume listing the names of 1,000 buddhas. According to the colophon, in 1141 a monk named Ryūkei held a ceremony commemorating the one-year anniversary of the death of his mentor, Rinkō Taishi. At the ceremony, a reading was held of all twelve volumes of the *Sutra of the Buddhas' Names*, and this transcription was given as an offering to the temple.

N-10: *Shōsan Jōdobutsu Shōju-kyō* (Sutra on the Pure Land and Salvation through the Grace of Buddha)

This particular sutra was translated by the Chinese monk Xuanzang who lived during the Tang dynasty (618–907 AD) and is an alternate translation of the *Sutra on the Buddha Amida* translated by the 4th-century monk Kumarajiva. The text venerates the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the blissful paradise the Pure Land (*sukhāvātī*), praises the greatness of the nation, and extols the virtues of numerous Buddhist deities. Made up of nine connected sheets of ramie paper that have been dyed yellow and featuring characters brushed in standard script, this work embodies the aesthetic preferences of sutra transcriptions made during the Tenpyō era (729–749 AD).

Room 6

Post-Conservation Work: Textiles

These textiles are being exhibited for the first time following the completion of conservation work. Until now, they had been tucked away in storage between two sheets of glass. These fragile textiles are over 1,300 years old. Safely storing and conserving delicate works like these for future generations is one of the Museum's most important tasks.

N-319-177-1 Cloth Fragments, With phoenix design

These fragments feature reversible embroidery of design elements in chain stitch, including fragments of a phoenix. Both wings, a lotus-shaped pedestal with a foot on it, and plants that seem to be grape leaves are visible. Chain stitch was rarely used in ancient Japan, and it is likely these fragments were originally produced in China during the 7th century. After comparing these fragments with works in the Shōsōin Repository at Tōdai-ji Temple in Nara, it seems these fragments were originally held in the Shōsōin Repository.

N-319-177-3 Cloth Fragments

These fragments were dyed using a carved-board clamp resist dyeing technique (called *kyōkechi*). One fragment is plain-weave silk featuring a flower design with looping edges to form petals. The other fragment has birds and flowers on it. Judging from the design elements and the production methods, these fragments were probably also originally held in the Shōsōin Repository.

N-319-177-10 Fragments of Ornaments for *Ban* (Buddhist Ritual Banner)

These plain-weave silk fragments are hanging strips that were once attached to the middle section of a Buddhist ritual banner (*ban*). When they were made, strips of fabric were folded in half and then the corners were folded inside to make them pointed at the bottom.