

## Room Six: Painting

### Buddhist Painting

The Buddhist paintings displayed here were originally mounted on a pair of folding screens, although now they are preserved as twelve separate hanging scrolls.

#### **N 3-1-1: Prince Shōtoku and Five Attendants**

Prince Shōtoku (574–622) was instrumental in spreading Buddhism in Japan and was the founder of Hōryūji Temple. In this painting, Prince Shōtoku sits under a canopy in the center, with three Buddhist monks and two aristocrats positioned around him. The figures were originally labelled on thin strips of paper, though the text is now illegible. A later painting on silk of the monk Kūkai (774–835), the founder of Shingon Esoteric Buddhism, had been sewn into this work during a repair, but was removed during conservation treatment.

#### **N3-1-2: Descent of Amida (Amitabha)**

The buddha Amida is depicted here with three bodhisattvas riding on clouds. They are descending to earth to guide a dying believer to the Pure Land, a Buddhist paradise where anyone can attain enlightenment. Depictions of this scene were later codified, but this early work retains unique, older stylistic choices – such as painting the buddha Amida and the bodhisattvas white.

#### **N3-1-3: Sakyamuni Triad with Sixteen Arhats**

The founder of Buddhism, the buddha Shaka, sits atop a lotus pedestal, his head surrounded by a halo. Before the pedestal are two attending bodhisattvas, Monju and Fugen, while the Sixteen Arhats, those tasked with protecting Buddhism after the buddha Shaka's death, are depicted on either side. The buddha Shaka's robes are decorated in detailed geometric patterns of stylized hemp leaves and Buddhist swastikas (*manji*) rendered in cut gold leaf.

#### **N3-1-4, 3-2-1: Fudo Myoo (Acalanatha) with Two Boy Attendants**

The fearsome wisdom king Fudō is charged with converting stubborn unbelievers to Buddhism and guiding them to enlightenment. In this painting, he stands atop a rocky throne jutting out from the sea. He is flanked by two of his manifestations, who appear as boy attendants – the white one is named Kongara and the red one is named Seitaka. The upper part of his halo is depicted as a violent swirl of flame.

### **N3-1-5: Shaka (Sakyamuni) Triad**

The buddha Shaka, the founder of Buddhism, sits cross-legged atop a lotus throne on a hexagonal pedestal with a lion making up a part of it. He is flanked by two attendants: To his right is Monju, the bodhisattva of wisdom, while Fugen, the bodhisattva of ascetic practice, rides an elephant to his left. The details on the lotus petals along with the patterns on the deities' robes are rendered in cut gold leaf and gold paint.

### **N3-1-6: Aizen Myoo (Ragaraja)**

Seated atop a lotus pedestal, the Wisdom King Aizen is depicted in a fearsome guise with three eyes and six arms, each of which holds a symbolic object. This deity was thought to have the power to change lust and passion into the desire for enlightenment. The base of the pedestal is inlaid with Buddhist treasures, such as flaming jewels.

### **N3-2-2: Miroku Bosatsu (Maitreya)**

Seated with his left leg pendent, the bodhisattva Miroku is depicted with large halos around his body and head. The bright colors used in this work indicate a more recent date of production, with similar works dating from the mid-1800s.

### **N3-2-3: Monju Bosatsu (Manjusri)**

The bodhisattva Monju, who represents the virtue of Buddhist wisdom, rides a majestic lion facing the viewer with its mouth open. He is portrayed as a child sitting atop a lotus, which symbolizes the purity of his wisdom, with a halo framing his face. A closer look at the muted greens and browns in the painting reveals that this image was embellished with gold and silver pigments, as well as finely-cut slivers of gold leaf.

### **N3-2-4: Thousand-armed Kannon (Avalokitesvara) and Twenty-eight Followers**

Shown standing atop a rock that juts from the sea, this bodhisattva possesses a thousand arms that represent his ability to save all living beings—although the actual number depicted here is forty-two. This incarnation of Kannon is usually depicted with slightly more than forty arms. He is flanked by thirteen attendants on either side, with the Thunder God to the upper right, and the Wind God to the upper left. The pigments are relatively well-preserved, and during conservation treatment, labels were found behind the old backing paper that listed the names of Kannon's twenty-eight followers.

### **N3-2-5: Descent of Amida (Amitabha) Triad**

The buddha Amida is shown descending to earth to guide a dying believer to the Pure Land, a Buddhist paradise where anyone can attain enlightenment. He is flanked by two attending bodhisattvas, Kannon and Seishi. The buddha Amida's body and robes are adorned with gold paint, and his halo is decorated in cut gold leaf and gold paint, hinting at the splendor of the original work.

### **N3-2-6 : Shaka Nyorai (Sakyamuni)**

The buddha Shaka, the founder of Buddhism, is depicted here cross-legged atop a lotus pedestal. He has halos around his body and head, and his red robe has been decorated in a fret pattern in gold paint. The lotus petals and the outline of the pedestal are decorated in relatively large pieces of cut gold leaf. Remnants of gold paint and layered gradations of color to add depth and shading are also visible on the hexagonal part of the pedestal.

Room 6: Textiles  
Warp-Faced Compound-Weave Floor Mat and  
Twill-Weave Bottom Sections of Buddhist Banners

A type of cloth with geometric patterns on a red ground is noted as a distinct textile of the Asuka period (593–710), called *shokkōkin*. The designs found on *shokkōkin* are still popular and can be found on a variety of textiles, including accessories for tea utensils, kimono sashes, and neckties. *Shokkōkin* was traditionally made using a warp-faced compound weave, an early technique that can be seen in textiles dating from around the 3rd century to the 7th century, but which fell out of favor in later centuries. 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.

This gallery is also currently displaying bottom sections of Buddhist banners with a variety of patterns rendered in twill weave. These works offer a glimpse into the colorful world of early textiles from the Asuka (593–710) to Nara period (710–794).

**N-43: Fragment of Joku Mat, With hexagons**

This *shokkōkin* textile was used as a floor mat. Its bright red ground is decorated with hexagons enclosing flowers and animals, such as birds and dogs. Ancient textiles typically feature a repeating pattern throughout. However, this textile is unusual in that its pattern is different in every band across its width.

**Banner “Legs”**

Buddhist ritual banners, called *ban*, were displayed at Buddhist temples. The *ban* are divided into three sections named after their resemblance to the shape of a person. The top, middle, and bottom sections are called the “head,” “body,” and “legs,” respectively. The bottom sections, or “legs,” are made up of slightly overlapping, long strips of cloths that were meant to flutter in the wind.

**N-319-61-2: Fragment of *Ban* (Buddhist Ritual Banner) “Banner leg”**

**N-319-63-1: Fragment of *Ban* (Buddhist Ritual Banner) “Banner leg”**

**N-319-102-3: Fragment of *Ban* (Buddhist Ritual Banner) “Banner leg”**

Despite its time-ravaged appearance, this fragment of the bottom section of a banner has retained its vibrant red color to a surprising extent – as if the dye had been recently applied. Red dyes are particularly prone to fading, and the high retention of color indicates the high quality of the dye used along with the herculean effort that must have gone into preserving this textile.

**N-319-75-1: Fragment of *Ban* (Buddhist Ritual Banner) "Banner Leg," With arrowhead pattern**

**N-319-87-1: Fragment of *Ban* (Buddhist Ritual Banner) "Banner Leg," With arrowhead pattern**

Some of the oldest textiles preserved at Hōryū-ji Temple feature geometric patterns, like the chevron pattern seen here. These kinds of textiles reflect the early stages of twill-weave production in Japan.

**N-319-89-3: Fragment of *Ban* (Buddhist Ritual Banner): "Banner Leg," With tortoiseshell and foliage designs in a tortoiseshell pattern**

This twill-weave fragment also incorporates a geometric pattern. The hexagons enclose turtles and stylized flowers depicted in figured twill on a twill-weave foundation structure, rather than on a plain-weave foundation. Virtually no similar examples have been found in the Tōdai-ji Temple's Shōsōin Repository (the other major collection of ancient textiles in Japan), making this example from Hōryū-ji Temple all the more valuable.

**N-319-108: Fragment of *Ban* (Buddhist Ritual Banner): "Banner Leg," With pattern of nested lozenges**

This twill-weave fragment has a repeating pattern of linked, nested diamonds. The pattern is irregular due to mistakes by the weaver, making it a notable example of the relaxed designs found in early textiles.

**N-319-113: Fragment of *Ban* (Buddhist Ritual Banner): "Banner Leg," With tortoiseshell pattern**

This twill-weave fragment features a repeating pattern of linked hexagons. A similar banner "leg" is attached to the *Large Kanton-ban* (Buddhist Ritual Banner) (N-24), revealing that this work was likely made in the latter half of the 7th century.

**N-319-161-1: Fragment of *Ban* (Buddhist Ritual Banner) "Banner Leg," With arrowhead pattern**

**N-319-165: Fragments of *Ban* (Buddhist Ritual Banner) "Banner Leg," With arrowhead pattern**

These chevron twill-weave fragments are from the bottom section of a Buddhist banner. They are an early example of Japanese twill-weave patterns and use techniques that are particularly old, even among warp- and weft-float twill and figured twill patterns woven on a plain-weave foundation structure.