

## Room 6: Calligraphy

### Transcription of the *Lotus Sutra*

N-12 *Hokke-kyo* (Lotus Sutra)

This scroll is from a complete eight-volume transcription of the *Lotus Sutra* on ramie paper that has been dyed yellow. The transcription was made with the aid of faintly ruled lines of ink between the vertical columns of text. Each vertical column contains exactly seventeen characters written in strong, bold brushstrokes, though in a less meticulous hand than the methodical, precise calligraphy that typified the Nara period (710–794). This discrepancy suggests that this transcription might actually be from the Heian period (794–1192).

## **Room Six: Textiles**

### **Buddhist Ritual Banners from the Nara Period (710–794)**

Stately Buddhist banners called *ban* adorned temple halls and were used during memorial services for the deceased. Many early Buddhist banners from the 7th and 8th centuries were passed down at Hōryū-ji Temple and are now housed in this collection. Some of the banners currently on view were used in a memorial service held for Emperor Shōmu in 757 AD, one year after his passing. Banners from the other major collection of ancient textiles in Japan—the Shōsōin Repository of Tōdai-ji Temple—are also included in this collection.

**N-319-3: Fragment of *Ban* (Buddhist Ritual Banner), With each square section consisting of four triangular pieces sewn together**

The main field of this banner is made up of square sections filled with four plain-weave silk triangles sewn together in alternating colors. Similarly constructed banners exist in Tōdai-ji Temple's Shōsōin Repository, which would seem to indicate this piece is from a transition period from Hōryū-ji-style banners to Shōsōin-style banners.

**N-319-22: Fragment of *Ban* (Buddhist Ritual Banner), With each square section consisting of four triangular pieces sewn together**

Like N-319-3, the main field of this banner is also made up of square sections, but these are filled with four, twill-weave triangles in alternating colors on both the front and back.

**N-319-23: Fragment of *Ban* (Buddhist Ritual Banner), With each square section consisting of four triangular pieces sewn together**

Also like N-319-3, the main field of this banner is made up of square sections filled with four plain-weave silk triangles in alternating colors, but the banner is nearly double in width.

**N-319-2: Fragment of *Ban* (Buddhist Ritual Banner), With each square section consisting of two pieces of cloth joined diagonally**

The square sections of the main field of this banner contain two different types of multicolored, patterned cloths that have been cut into triangles and sewn together. During the Asuka period (593–710) these sections were made into elongated rectangles, but in the following Nara period (710–794), they were made into squares, emulating banners from China's Tang dynasty (618–907). This particular banner was used in a memorial service held for Emperor Shōmu one year after his passing.

**N-319-4: *Ban* (Buddhist Ritual Banner), With appliqued cloth cutout in the shape of flowers**

The fields on this banner contain a kind of silk gauze (*ra*) made into diamond-shaped sections with wavy edges. Within the diamonds, gold thread was used to make flower-like shapes in a highly-

decorative design. This banner was also used in a memorial service held for Emperor Shōmu one year after his passing.