

Room 6: Calligraphy

Lotus Sutra passed down at Hōryūji Temple

N-12: *Lotus Sutra*

This scroll is from a complete eight-volume transcription of the *Lotus Sutra* on yellow hemp paper. Faintly ruled lines of ink form vertical columns, each containing exactly 17 characters. All eight volumes are the work of one calligrapher, who rendered each character in thick, powerful brushstrokes. Compared to the controlled and orderly writing that typified the Nara period (710–794), this piece shows slightly looser brushwork, suggesting that it might be from the early Heian period (794–1192).

Room 6: Textiles

A Rare Sash and an Unassuming Felt Rug

This gallery currently features a sash that is one of the most impressive textiles passed down at Hōryūji Temple. The sash is an example of a distinct textile from the Asuka period (593–710), called *shokkōkin*, a type of warp-faced, compound-weave cloth with woven geometric patterns over a red ground. The sash retains a surprising amount of color, despite being woven over 1,300 years ago. Together with the sash, a felt rug evidencing early trade with continental Asia is also displayed. These two works reveal the advanced textile techniques and international taste that existed in Japan from the late 6th to late 8th century.

N-47: Four Fragments of a Sash

Shokkōkin is a distinct warp-faced, compound-weave textile from the Asuka period (593–710). To make a warp-faced compound weave, vertical threads (warp) in sets of differing colors are arranged on a loom. The weaver then passes the horizontal thread (weft) under specific vertical threads to bring the desired color to the surface of the cloth and make a design. This is an early patterning technique that was later succeeded by weft-faced compound weaves from the 8th century onwards. The patterns on weft-faced compound weaves are made from different colors of horizontal thread (weft).

This sash allegedly belonged to Princess Kashiwade, a consort of Prince Shōtoku.

N-43: Fragment of *Joku* Mat; With hexagons (front side cloth)

This brocade textile fragment was originally part of a floor mat called a *joku*. The design, rendered on a vivid red ground, consists of a hexagonal “tortoiseshell” pattern with flowers, birds, and dog-like animals inside the hexagons.

N-54-1: White Rug

Used by monks in ancient Buddhist temples, this type of rug is made of an early type of felt that was produced by pressing wool fibers together. This particular rug was likely made in Central Asia where nomadic tribes continue to make this type of felt today. After its creation, this rug was sent to China and is thought to have been brought to Japan by emissaries from the Tang dynasty (618–907). Though this rug may look less impressive than other textiles in the Collection, its path to Japan is a testament to the incredible scope of international trade during this early period.