

Room 6: Calligraphy

Ancient Buddhist Sutras

N13-1: *Bonmō-kyō* (Sutra of Brahma's Net)

This handscroll is a transcription of a Buddhist text, called the *Sutra of Brahma's Net*. It was brushed on dark blue paper with ruled lines in gold pigment. According to the *Record of Hōryūji and Biography of Prince Shōtoku* (13th century), this impressive calligraphy was brushed by Prince Shōtoku himself in the 7th century. However, scholars believe it was in fact written in the early Heian period, around the 9th century. Most sutras written in gold on dark blue paper from that period only remain in fragments. This text is a rare and valuable example of a complete transcription in its original handscroll format.

N14-1: *Butsumyo-kyo* (Sutra of the Buddhas' Names)

After repenting of one's sins, the *Sutra of the Buddhas' Names* preaches that sins can be obliterated by the power of chanting the *nianfo* (*nenbutsu*) and remembering all the names of the buddhas. A translation by the Indian monk Bodhiruci in twelve volumes is a well-known version of this sutra. 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, a monk named Ryūkei, created this work in 1141 for a ceremony commemorating the one-year anniversary of the death of his predecessor, 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-9: Sutra Scroll Wrapper

Used to protect sutra scrolls, this wrapper is made from thin pieces of bamboo that were tied together with strings dyed in various colors.

Room 6: Textiles

Textile Techniques in Ancient Japan

This gallery presents an overview of the weaving and dyeing techniques used in textiles that were passed down at the Hōryūji Temple in Nara. These textiles date back to the Asuka (593–710) and Nara (710–794) periods.

Tie Dyeing (*Kōkechi*)

The dyer pinches small areas of cloth to form bundles and then ties these bundles tightly with string. When the cloth is immersed in dye, the dye does not reach the areas inside the bundles.

I-336-5: Pieces of Cloth, With *meyui* motif in *kōkechi* (tie-dyeing) on green ground

I-336-7: Cloth, With double *meyui* motif in *kōkechi* (tie-dyeing) on blue ground

I-336-8: Pieces of Cloth, With grids and diagonal crosses design in *kōkechi* (tie-dyeing) on dark blue ground

I-336-13: Cloth, With *meyui* motif in *kōkechi* (tie-dyeing) on light brown ground

I-336-16: Cloth, With *meyui* motif in *kōkechi* (tie-dyeing) on green ground

Clamp-Resist Dyeing with Wooden Boards (*Kyōkechi*)

A cloth is pressed between two boards carved with designs. The dye does not reach the areas of the cloth pressed between the uncarved sections.

I-336-19: *Ra* Gauze, With flowering plants design in *kyōkechi* (clamp-resist dyeing) on red ground

Twill Weave

Twill weave results in durable cloth with a diagonal weave pattern. The patterns on twill-weave textiles developed from geometric to figurative, such as dragons and phoenixes, from the Asuka (593–710) and Nara (710–794) periods.

I-336-28: Cloth, With paired dragons and double bead roundels design on white ground

I-336-34: *Ban* (Buddhist Ritual Banner) “Banner Leg,” With flowers and branches design on white ground

I-336-39: Cloth, With paired birds and bead roundels design on reddish purple ground

I-336-42: Cloth, With flowers design on green ground

I-336-46: Cloth, With *shichiyō* roundels design in a tortoiseshell pattern on light indigo ground

Warp Brocade

Warp brocades use vertical threads in various colors to create small patterns. It was popular from around the 7th century to early 8th century.

I-336-44: Cloth, With flowers design on striped ground

I-336-61: Cloth, With flower and alternating checkered pattern in assorted colors

I-336-65/66: Cloth, With birds in bead roundels design on red ground

I-336-69: Pieces of Cloth, With paired phoenixes and bead roundels design on light brown ground

I-336-77: Cloth, With flowers design on yellowish green ground

Weft Brocade

The weaver uses horizontal threads in various colors to create patterns. This technique allows some freedom in creating colorful patterns in different sizes. It was developed during the Nara period (710–794) and continues to the present day.

I-336-72: Cloth, With flowers design on yellow ground

I-336-81: Cloth, With pattern of nested diamonds on striped ground

“Assorted-Colors” Weave

“Assorted-colors” weave uses threads created by twisting together multiple threads of different colors. This kind of weaving gives the cloth a soft blurriness.

I-336-87/88: Fragment of Cloth, With lateral stripes design in assorted colors

Felt

Felt is a cloth made with intertwined wool fibers. The felt textiles of ancient Japan were dyed with various patterns.

I-336-107: Rug, With flowers design on white ground