

## Room 6: Calligraphy

### *Record of the Imperial Bequest to Hōryūji (Hōryūji Kenmotsuchō) and Record of Hōryūji and Biography of Prince Shōtoku (Kokon Mokurokushō)*

#### **N-5: Record of the Imperial Bequest to Hōryūji (*Hōryūji Kenmotsuchō*)**

In the year 756, Empress Kōken donated the possessions of the late Emperor Shōmu to 18 temples, including Tōdaiji, in prayer for the repose of his soul. This document records the objects donated to Hōryūji temple.

#### **N-18: Record of Hōryūji and Biography of Prince Shōtoku (*Kokon Mokurokushō*)**

In the first half of the 13th century, the monk Kenshin compiled this record of Hōryūji temple and the biography of Prince Shōtoku, who oversaw the completion of the temple, into two volumes.

#### **N-19: Transcription of Record of Hōryūji and Biography of Prince Shōtoku (*Kokon Mokurokushō*)**

This copy of *Kokon Mokurokushō* (N-18) was created in the Muromachi period (1392–1573).

## Room 6: Textiles

### An Exquisite Obi and Textiles Woven with Various Techniques

The textiles currently on view include fragments of a lavish obi (sash) that is said to have belonged to Emperor Shōmu (701–756), and textiles dyed and woven using different materials and techniques, such as *kumihimo* (cords made by interlacing threads in a repeated pattern), twill, silk, and felt. Please enjoy the rich variety of dyeing and weaving techniques of ancient Japanese textiles.

#### **N-49: Obi Fragment with Glass Beads and Pearls**

Nara period, 8th century; Important Cultural Property

The colored yarns of this obi have been interlaced in a pattern comprised of intersecting diagonal lines that changes from dark to lighter tones. The obi purportedly belonged to Emperor Shōmu. Notably, pearl and glass beads of various colors are braided onto the yarns. They indicate the obi must have been worn by a person of high social standing. Even in the Shōsōin Imperial Repository Collection in Nara no similar rare item remains.

#### **N-50-1: Fragment of Buddhist Ritual Banner (*Ban*) with Arrowheads**

Asuka–Nara period, 7th–8th century; Important Cultural Property

This fragment of the upper part of a Buddhist ritual banner is made of braided yarns in multiple colors forming a braided cord with an arrowhead pattern. A similar pattern can be seen in the obi worn by Prince Shōtoku in a famous portrait of the prince.

#### **I-336-3a: Cloth with Butterflies, Inscribed “Tōin”**

Nara period, 8th century

This brown piece of silk cloth is decorated with ink paintings of butterflies spreading their wings viewed from above and side. It has an inscription “Tōin,” meaning the Eastern building in Hōryūji Temple. The fold mark in the center indicates it was originally shaped like an obi.

#### **I-336-4: *Ra* Gauze with Small Flower Roundels**

Nara period, 8th century

This textile fragment is an example of *ra* gauze, which creates woven patterns with a complex warp structure. It is decorated with a design of small round six-petaled flowers in gold and silver printing on a finely woven diagonal grid-like *tasuki* pattern. Even though it is only a small fragment, it conveys a delicate impression.

#### **I-336-93: Embroidery with Dragons**

Asuka period, 7th century

This piece of silk cloth is decorated with a design of dragons on a base of horizontally arranged

squares rendered in colored threads. The slender, relatively short dragon that stands on four legs closely resembles the design found in metalwork of the Kofun period (ca. 3rd–7th century). Together with the *Tenjukoku Paradise Embroidery*, National Treasure owned by Chūgūji Temple in Nara, it is viewed as one of the oldest embroideries of its kind in Japan.

### **I-336-102: Embroidered Buddhist Image**

Asuka period, 7th century

The Buddhist image of a heavenly figure and a wish-granting jewel is embroidered on a creased fabric, called *shijira*, woven with strongly twisted warp and weft yarns. The embroidery is rendered in a type of double-sided stitch that can create the same images on both sides of the fabric. It may have originally been a part of the *Kanjō-ban* (gilt bronze banner for the Kanjō ceremony) in the Hōryūji Treasures collection or a leg for a small gilt-bronze banner.

### **I-336-108: Rug with Flowers**

Nara period, 8th century

This rug is made of compressed wool, which is comparable to modern felt rugs. Its white ground is decorated with fitted floral felt pieces dyed in indigo, blue, red, and light red. A few similar examples remain in the Shōsōin Imperial Repository, but this is the only rug of its kind passed down at Hōryūji Temple, making it an extremely valuable object.

### **N-319-14: Fragments of Buddhist Ritual Banner (*Ban*): "Banner Leg"**

Asuka–Nara period, 7th–8th century

These fragments are the remains of the lower part of a banner body and its four banner legs. The dark red leg is made of twill and decorated with dotted circles enclosing animals or plants design, while the other legs in other colors are made of plain-weave silk. Scholars believe that this piece was originally made with five colors in mind, and one can imagine the vivid appearance of this banner in its original form when they were made over a millennium ago.

### **N-319-34: Fragments of Buddhist Ritual Banner (*Ban*)**

Asuka–Nara period, 7th–8th century

These fragments are the remains of the banner head, the lower part of the banner body, and the upper part of the banner legs of a silk ritual banner. Yellow banners were used as offerings in memorial services for the repose of the souls of the deceased.

### **Twill Banner Legs**

**N-319-47-2: Fragment of Buddhist Ritual Banner (*Ban*): "Banner Leg" with Arrowheads**

**N-319-115: Fragment of Buddhist Ritual Banner (*Ban*): "Banner Leg" with Alternating Checkered Pattern**

### **N-319-117-1: Fragment of Buddhist Ritual Banner (*Ban*): "Banner Leg" with Checkered Pattern**

Asuka–Nara period, 7th–8th century

Many banners passed down at Hōryūji Temple is made of twill silk. Twill is a material created with warp or weft yarns continuously crossing over the other in a set order. Hōryūji twill changed with time from geometrical designs such as arrowhead and nested diamond patterns to larger figurative ones such as grape vines and phoenixes. As a monochromatic fabric, the textiles look plain at first glance, but try observing the banner from a different angle and the pattern will emerge more clearly.

### **Plain-Weave Silk Banner Legs**

#### **N-319-52-2: Fragment of Buddhist Ritual Banner (*Ban*): "Banner Leg"**

Asuka–Nara period, 7th–8th century

Plain-weave silk is the simplest fabric to produce, with the warp and weft yarns crossing one another in turn. The fabric was commonly used for banner legs. While banners used in rituals for the deceased were dyed solely in yellow, banners used in other Buddhist ceremonies and to decorate the temple halls were dyed in a variety of colors. The main five colors were navy blue, red, yellow, green, and purple. These examples provide us with a glimpse of the seemingly simple but profound world of early dyed textiles.

### **N-319-123: Fragment of Cloth with Dotted Squares**

Nara period, 8th century

*Kōkechi* was an early tie-dyeing technique in which small areas of cloth were gathered into bundles and thread was wound around them to prevent certain areas from being dyed, resulting in round-edged diamond patterns. This was done by hand, and it was impossible to obtain a completely uniform pattern. On this piece, some of the dots are square-shaped or elliptical, and the amount of thread used in the winding also subtly altered the resulting dots.