

Room 6: Textiles

Various Weaving and Dyeing Techniques

This exhibition focuses on embroidered Buddhist images, and gives an overview of the various dyeing and weaving techniques that have been passed down through treasures from the Asuka (593–710) to the Muromachi (1392–1573) period. Hōryūji Temple was founded during the Asuka period and has remained a lively complex with an active monastic community up to the present. For this reason, its treasured objects, including textiles, are from different periods in history, which characterizes the “Hōryūji Treasures.” The current exhibition provides an overview of textiles handed down at Hōryūji, including works from medieval times, which are rarely exhibited, focusing on the techniques used to produce them.

N-32-2 Embroidered Buddhist Image

N-32-5 Embroidered Buddhist Image

N-32-7 Embroidered Buddhist Images

These works depict on sash-like narrow pieces of silk celestial figures with their heavenly robes fluttering high up above their heads. The designs are outlined and the interior is filled skillfully with firmly twisted embroidery thread. Known as *tsugibari*, it is a very elaborate double-sided embroidery technique in which the design appears the same on both sides.

N-45-2 Cloth Fragment, With beaded pattern and floral design in lozenges

From the Kofun (ca. 3rd–7th century) to the Asuka and early Nara periods, Japanese brocade was mainly warp brocade (*tatenishiki*), which featured patterns created with several color warps. This cloth fragment is an example of such a brocade with a beaded intersecting diagonal lines and stylized flowers within those lines.

N-46-2 Cloth Fragment, With lions and elephants design

This is also a fragment of a *tatenishiki* brocade. The lions are flanked by flaming jewels and elephants on both sides. The elephants are depicted in a peculiar way with spots and a flaming ornament on their back.

N-46-5 Fragment of Kanton

Kanton is a plain-weave ikat fabric woven with pre-dyed warp threads. There are many extant fragments among banners of Hōryūji Temple, but hardly any examples of Kanton have survived in the textile collection of the Shōsōin repository. The period in which it was used was short, and it is possible that it was produced in China or Korea based on techniques from India and Western Asia.

N-46-3-1 Fragment of Float-Weave Brocade, With mountain roads and water caltrop design on red ground

Brocade produced in the Asuka period was mainly warp brocade (*tatenishiki*), but some float-weave (*ukimon*) brocade was also made in this period. This float-weave brocade is woven with small geometric patterns comprised of diamonds and zigzags.

N-44 Fragment of Wrapping Cloth Brocade, With circle and flower design on purple ground

This work was handed down as a wrapping cloth brocade for the *Natsu no onfusuma* (summer quilt) currently stored away due to its fragile state), which Prince Shōtoku is said to have used. The red brocade is decorated with two distinct designs of chrysanthemums and other floral patterns in purple, yellow, green, and white threads.

N-46-6 Cloth Fragment, With chrysanthemums and paulownias design

Judging from the condition of its colors, this cloth fragment is thought to have been used as a wrapping cloth originally consisting of two parts. The design is made up of chrysanthemums and paulownias alternating in white, green, and yellow threads on a red ground, which is typical of patterns from the Muromachi period.

N-53 Mat

This square mat is decorated with brocade around the edges. Its decoration of dyed floral patterns resembles mats in modern homes today. At Hōrinji Temple in Ikaruga, Nara prefecture, there is a similar mat (Important Cultural Property; passed down allegedly as part of the belongings of Empress Suiko) dating back to the 7th century.