

Reproduction of the *Shokusei* Priest's Robe in Seven Strips of Mottled Colors

Susumu Shirai

The reproduction of the *shokusei* (織成) priest's robe in seven strips of mottled colors, (North Selection 1, no. 3) was a three-year project. The “*shokusei*” is a type of tapestry weave done by crossing single-color ground weft yarn horizontally for every color weft. Today, this robe is an only artifact to show this method.

Our reproduction process respects to duplicate the original form with the same materials and the same techniques used for the original *shokusei* priest's robe, while also making with contemporary technology. This project was carried out with a view to making the reproduced robe as similar as possible to the original.

For the reproduction, research into the priest's robe was conducted during each production stage: elaborating the pattern with *shokusei*, then performing the design, basic composition, thread making, dyeing and weaving. Research was also conducted on the silks of core, border, stripes, back, and decorative threads for the accessories.

For the pattern elaboration and design stages, we studied the entire composition of the pattern with *shokusei*. The results of this study were used to pick out each constitutive part of the priest's robe and copy them into the design, in order to accurately reproduce the pattern.

In the dyeing stage, colors were matched using original thread samples that had been dyed with natural dyes, such as Japanese madder (*Rubia akane*), miscanthus (*Miscanthus tinctorius*), amur cork tree (*Phellodendron amurense*), gromwell (*Lithospermum erythrorhizon*) and knotweed (*Persicaria tinctoria*) mentioned in the *Engishiki* (an ancient source of laws and regulations). As the robe had become discolored over time, colors were chosen by comparing and matching them with parts as less as discolored.

Although the original robe's cloth had been made using the tapestry technique, for the reproduction a jacquard loom was used since the pattern shapes had to be accurately reproduced.

The accessories of this robe were reproduced mostly following above-mentioned procedures. Although the decorative threads no longer remained on the original priest's robe, their positions were determined by finding traces of the cord holders, and were reproduced by referring to the braids that still remain in Shosoin as surviving portions of attachments on the robe.

For the sewing, the robe and the pattern were matched, and fitting was done first before the actual sewing.

The restoration and reproduction of the *shokusei* priest's robe in seven strips of mottled colors was completed in accordance with the above steps. Among the various materials used, Japanese madder for dyeing was presented by the Emperor, while the thread from *koishimaru* silkworms was a gift from the Empress.

Research on the *Nishiki* Silk Cloth with Patterns of Beaded Medallions Enclosing Rhinoceroses

Atsuhiko Ogata

The *nishiki* silk cloth with patterns of beaded medallions enclosing rhinoceroses that has been kept in the Shosoin is a famous example of *nishiki* of the finest quality dating back to the time of China's Sui and Tang dynasties. Among the various types of the *nishiki* handed down from Horyuji Temple and the Shosoin, which make up almost all of Japanese *nishiki* from the 7th and 8th centuries, this one's main pattern has the largest diameter and is gallant beyond comparison. On the brown ground are patterns of beaded medallions with patterns of rhinoceroses and lions facing each other under flowering trees. All patterns were depicted with weft yarns of six colors. Even in terms of the weaving technique, one cannot deny its excellence—hard-twist yarns were used for the warp, and no unevenness can be seen in the weft density. Like the Shosoin's *nishiki* with large *karahana* patterns on a blue ground (the *nishiki* used to make the front of a bag for a *biwa* lute) and Horyuji Temple's *nishiki* with patterns of beaded medallions enclosing four lion hunters, this one is thought to have been woven at an extremely skilled workshop in China (Sui/Tang), then sent to Japan.

Today, however, the *nishiki* silk cloth with patterns of beaded medallions enclosing rhinoceroses only exists in the form of one thousand and several hundred discolored fragments (all fragments of fabrics mounted in albums), making investigative research difficult. No discussion of it has been done since the late Eizo Ota conducted a research at the request of the Imperial Household Agency and published a paper to introduce it to the world in the early 1950s.

For this occasion, while repairing the fragments of ancient fabrics mounted in albums, the *nishiki* fragments with patterns of beaded medallions enclosing rhinoceroses (also mounted in albums) that had become damaged over the years were carefully inspected. As a result, facts not discussed in Ota's paper became evident, such as textile measurements of that time, warp twisting, pattern colors, and textile surface conditions. The new findings have been compiled and are now being reported on, because presenting information on the current state of world-famous *nishiki* silk fabric is most certainly a worthy endeavor.

Through recent archaeological investigations in various parts of China, many different kinds of the *nishiki* with beaded-ring patterns have been discovered. Nevertheless, only the results of the research pertaining to *nishiki* with patterns of beaded medallions enclosing rhinoceroses are discussed here, since there is still not enough data for the overall topic to be discussed systematically.

The Red-Lacquered *Keyaki* Cabinet with Fine-Grain Pattern and the “Red-Lacquered *Keyaki* Cabinet”

Akihiko Nishikawa

Two cabinets described in the title of this article are both recorded in the list of rare treasures of the state that were dedicated to Todai-ji Temple on June 21, 756. According to the list, the red-lacquered *keyaki* (zelkova wood) cabinet with fine-grain pattern was first kept by Emperor Tenmu (period of the reign: 673–686) and then passed on to the succeeding monarchs Jito, Monmu, Gensho, Shomu and Koken (the reign of Empress Koken: 749–758). The list mentions that the “red-lacquered *keyaki* (zelkova wood) cabinet” was a gift from King Uija of Paekche (period of the reign: 641–660) to Kamatari Fujiwara, and later passed on to Emperor Shomu.

However, only one of the cabinets still exists. In the Meiji era (1868–1912), that cabinet was identified as the red-lacquered *keyaki* cabinet with fine-grain pattern. As for the “red-lacquered *keyaki* cabinet”, it is believed to have been lost. This belief is based on the conclusion that the design of the existing cabinet follows the classical style and has the complicated *keyaki* wood grain pattern mentioned in the description of the red-lacquered *keyaki* cabinet in the list of rare treasures of the state. However, it is possible to apply this description also to the “red-lacquered *keyaki* cabinet” which is considered to have been lost. So it can be said that the above-mentioned conclusion is not decisive.

Therefore, based on the descriptions of the items in these two cabinets recorded in the list of rare treasures of the state and other historical documents, as well as on the quality of the materials of the existing cabinet, various considerations were made regarding their characteristics and production provenance of the two cabinets to once again investigate the matter. Although the current identification was not, as a result, revised, it nevertheless became apparent that it is necessary to re-examine the identification process followed in the Meiji era (i. e., the basis for positioning all of the Shosoin treasures).

The so-called “*Jingo-Keiun Ni Nen Gogankyo*” Scrolls in the Shogozo Repository

Takehiko Iida

The Shogozo scrolls with Buddhist sutras were safeguarded within the Sonshoin, the sub-temple of Todaiji Temple. They were dedicated to the Imperial Family in the Meiji era, which are currently in the trust of the office of the Shosoin. Among them, there are 742 Buddhist sutra scrolls classified as *Jingo-keiun ni nen gogankyo* (神護景雲二年御願經) (scripture set blessed by prayer in the year Jingo-keiun 2 [768 CE]), which are handwritten *issaikyo* (complete collection of scriptures) that were commissioned by the Empress Regnant Shotoku (称徳天皇). As examples of the typical *issaikyo* of the late Nara era (710–794), they are ranked as a key in Shogozo scrolls along with the Sui scrolls, the Tang scrolls and the *Tenpyo juni nen gogankyo* (scripture set blessed by prayer in the year Tenpyo 12 [740 CE]). However, only four of them are definitely Jingo-keiun sutras with Buddhist prayers—most of the remaining ones are only classified as Jingo-keiun by the paper used and the style of writing. This report focused on the Jingo-keiun without Buddhist prayers, in an attempt to clarify what precisely they are.

Lettering (insertion in the text) on the reverse sides of the actual sutra scrolls and the page numbers were used to determine the correlation with the activity reports described in the Shosoin documents, which had been written by the scribes and proofreaders, which led to identify the responsible scribe for each sutra scroll. Add to the above point, based on the sutra handwriting and the scroll style, it was possible to ascertain which scrolls were produced under which *issaikyo* transcriptions.

This led to the conclusion that most of the Jingo-keiun Sutra Shogozo scrolls without Buddhist prayers belong to the *Ima-ko-ichibu issaikyo* (今更一部一切經) transcribed from 774 to 776. This *issaikyo* is the last set of the five *issaikyo* sets produced at Todaiji Temple’s sutra transcription office (the *Ho-sha-issaikyo-sho* 奉写一切經所) during the Hoki era (770–781), and the set was safeguarded by that temple in a comprehensive form. Many factors are still unknown regarding the transcription process. However, just as for the *Tenpyo juni nen gogankyo*, it was discovered that the actual sutra scrolls and the documents compiled during their production remain together. This means a clue has been found which may be used to clarify the transcription process.