

UTOPIAN IMAGERY IN THE TREASURES OF THE SHOSŌIN: VISIONS OF IMMORTALITY IN NARA-PERIOD JAPAN

Yoshiharu Inokuchi

The Shōsōin Treasure House contains a significant number of objects depicting realms of the immortals, including the *Mulberry Wood Genkan (Round Bodied Lute)* (South Section 125), the *Jar for the Tōko Game* (Middle Section 170), and the *Round Mirror with Clouds and Hermits Riding on Birds* (North Section 42).¹ Such imagery reflects the Chinese belief in immortality, a utopian concept whose influence was also felt in the society of Nara-period Japan. For example, the round leather plectrum guard on the abovementioned *genkan* (Ch., *ruanxian*) is painted with a scene of two figures seated at a go game board being watched by an onlooker, seemingly hermits who have left their worldly existences behind.

This article discusses evocations of utopia with a special focus on the two go players depicted on the *Mulberry Wood Genkan*. Traditionally, such figures would represent anonymous lofty scholars, immortals, or hermits. In this work, however, the combination of certain visual elements with the fact that one of the mythical Seven Sages in the Bamboo Grove 竹林七賢 favors the round bodied lute has led previously to the hypothesis that the painting on this instrument depicts the Seven Sages in the Bamboo Grove.

The background for the three figures contains such elements as ancient trees and a bamboo grove on an overall pattern of lotus petals. Early Chinese texts tell us that a background of lotus petals symbolizes the sun rising from the east. We might also infer a connection between the vine entwined aged pine trees and the *fusang* (J., *fusō*) 扶桑, an imaginary sacred tree in ancient China thought to be located in the ocean to the east and strongly associated with the rising sun. One of the Chinese characters in the word “*fusang*” is the character for “mulberry” 桑, making the connection to the *Mulberry Wood Genkan* all the more cogent. Understanding the symbolism of the background motifs allows us to surmise that the two figures on opposite sides of the go board are seated on a north-south axis, an identification seemingly supported by the color of their garments: the figure on the right is draped in red, which represents the south in Chinese mythology, and the figure on the left wears blue, which represents the north.

These and other factors suggest the two old men depicted here are in fact the deities of the Northern Polar Star 北斗星 and the Southern Polar Star 南斗星, two immortals described in the *Soushenji* 搜神記 a Jin-dynasty (265–420) Chinese anthology of legends and stories by Ganbao 干宝 (n.d.) as old men absorbed in a game of go.

(English translation by Melissa M. Rinne)

¹ These three objects were exhibited in the 54th Annual *Exhibition of Shosoin Treasures* at the Nara National Museum in 2002.

INORGANIC PIGMENTS FOUND ON OBJECTS IN THE SHOSOIN

Masakazu Naruse

Since the early 1980s, the Office of the Shosoin has been systematically conducting non-destructive studies of materials used in objects in the Treasure House using an X-ray diffractometer (XRD) and an X-ray fluorescence spectrometer (XRF). This article describes the findings of these studies with regards to inorganic pigments.

The Shosoin contains approximately 400 painted objects, of which over 150 items have been investigated to date, primarily using the abovementioned apparatuses. These treasures have been preserved over the centuries under better conditions than most archaeological remains and architectural structures, making the reliability of these pigment-related findings accordingly high.

The accompanying table shows a list of inorganic pigments identified in the painted objects. In addition to these more frequently found examples, however, we also discovered a number of less common pigments, not listed on the chart. These include a white pigment composed of weddellite and calcite, a green pigment made of brochantite and malachite, and a red pigments, one a combination of hematite and maghemite and the other made from hematite and magnetite.

Additionally, recent studies using a scanning electron microscope (SEM) have revealed that the calcium carbonate pigments found in the Shosoin were obtained from shells.

(English translation by Melissa M. Rinne)

Table. INORGANIC PIGMENTS IDENTIFIED ON OBJECTS IN THE SHOSIN

Color	Modern Pigment Name	Pigment Name in the Nara Period	Chemical Formula	Mineral Name	No. of Shosin Objects Using Pigment
White	Lead White	<i>Karagofun</i> (唐胡粉)	$2PbCO_3 \cdot Pt(OH)_2$	Hydrocerussite	20
	Unknown	<i>Yamatogofun</i> (倭胡粉)	$PbCl_2$ $PbClOH$ $Pb_2Cl(O,OH)_2 \cdot x = 0 \sim 0.32$	Cotunnite Laurionite Blixite	5 9 13
White	Lead Sulfate	Unknown	$PbSO_4 / K_2Pt(SO_4)_2 / Pt(SO_4)_2$	Anglesite / Palmierite / Lanarkite	11
	Calcium Carbonate	Unknown	$CaCO_3$	Calcite	19
	Unknown	Unknown	$Ca_2(PO_4)_2(OH, F, Cl)$	Apatite	12
	White Clay	<i>Hakudo</i> (白土)	Aluminosilicate	Clay mineral	15
Red	Cinnabar	<i>Shusa</i> (朱沙)	HgS	Cinnabar	76
	Red Ochre	<i>Shido</i> (紫土)	Fe_2O_3	Hematite	17
	Red Lead	<i>Tan</i> (丹)	Pb_3O_4	Minium	69
	King's Yellow	<i>Shio</i> (雌黄)	As_2S_3	Orpiment	7
Yellow	Yellow Ochre	Unknown	$Fe_2O_3 \cdot nH_2O$	Limonite	1
	Mountain Green	<i>Rokushō</i> (緑青)・ <i>Byakuroku</i> (白緑)	$CuCO_3 \cdot Cu(OH)_2$	Malachite	41
Green	Unknown	Unknown	$Cu(OH)_2Cl$	Atacamite or Palatacamite	2
	Green Earth	Unknown	$K(Fe, Al)_3(Si, Al)_4O_{10}(OH)_2$ or $K(Mg, Fe, Al)_3(Si, Al)_4O_{10}(OH)_2$	Glaucanite or Celadonite	5
Blue	Mountain Blue	<i>Konjō</i> (金青)・ <i>Byakusei</i> (白青)	$2CuCO_3 \cdot Cu(OH)_2$	Azurite	24
Gold	Gold	<i>Kinpaku</i> (金薄)・ <i>Kindei</i> (金泥)・ <i>Kinboku</i> (金墨)	Au	Gold	26
Silver	Silver	<i>Ginpaku</i> (銀薄)・ <i>Gindei</i> (銀泥)・ <i>Ginboku</i> (銀墨)	Ag	Silver	35

Additionally, pigments were discovered that were partially composed of weddellite [$Ca_2O_4 \cdot 2H_2O$], brochantite [basic copper sulphate: $CuSO_4 \cdot 3Cu(OH)_2$], and magnemite (iron oxide: Fe_2O_3). These have been factored into the categories of calcium carbonate, mountain green, and red ochre in the above chart.

A SURVEY OF GLASS-MOUNTED MANUSCRIPT FRAGMENTS IN THE SHOSAIN

Takehiko Iida

The Shosoin contains numerous documents and sutra manuscripts conserved in a variety of formats. The majority of works were categorized, pasted onto backing papers and mounted as a series of handscrolls; however, other examples were mounted as individual handscrolls or album leaves. This article introduces a number of calligraphy fragments that have been temporarily mounted between double sheets of glass, speculates upon their original formats and discusses their written content.

Having been grouped together primarily for the practical purpose of conservation, these glass-mounted fragments are not intrinsically related to one another and are diverse in nature. Among them are missing sections of longer works in the Shosoin, which have been mounted as handscrolls, such as the 748 (Tempyō 20) *Senbu Hokkekyō jūhon chō* (Register for the copying of one thousand manuscripts of the Lotus Sutra) or the 762 (Tempyō-hōji 6) *Ishiyamadera Zōbutsusho sakumotsu chō* (Record of objects made at the Bureau of Construction for Ishiyama-dera Temple). Other examples are fragments of government documents relating to the *ritsuryō* laws of the day, which were found among the backing papers used in the mounting of screens, such as *Bai Shiragi butsu ge* (Request for objects to purchase from Silla), discovered in the backing papers of *Screen Panels of Women under Trees with Bird Feathers* (North Section 44). Yet other pieces were paper tags that had been attached to objects as identification labels at the time of donation.

One example of special interest is a *Kenteibun* (Certificate of authorization) itemizing details about the various incenses stored in a certain *karabitsu* chest. This certificate was kept together with the chest as a sort of inventory label, however on the back of the paper is inscribed a record telling that some of the incenses were removed during the Kōnin era (810–823), forty years after they had been placed in the Treasure House. It is highly unusual that a label for one of the containers be reused nearly half a century later, but of equal interest is the fact that the record states that the incense was removed for use in ordination (*kanjō*) rituals. It is perhaps related and highly significant that immediately before this date, the priest Kūkai built the temple of Shingon-in in Tōdai-ji as an ordination monastery.

Another fragment of interest contains only three lines with the name of two sutras and a date written in red ink. During the Hōki era (770–780), the administration of a major project to make two manuscripts of the entire Buddhist Canon (*Shi nibu issaikyō*) was transferred from the Buddhist Canon Scriptorium at Saidai-ji (Saidai-ji Issaikyō Sho) to the Dedicatory Buddhist Canon Scriptorium (Hosha Issaikyō Sho) under the administration of the Bureau for the Construction of Todai-ji Temple (Zō Tōdai-ji Shi), at which time unfinished sutra copies were transferred from Saidai-ji to Tōdai-ji. The author determined that the above fragment is a memo recording the name of manuscripts that had disappeared during the move. This piece of writing is an important historical document for its concrete information about how the administration of this move was conducted.

(English translation by Melissa M. Rinne)

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE
DISCOURSE ON THE THEORY OF CONSCIOUSNESS-ONLY,
FASCICLE 4, AND THE PRIEST KUIJI

Yusuke Yoneda

In issue No. 23 (2001) of this bulletin, the author published an article entitled “Relations between Buddhist Sutras in the Shōgozō Repository of the Shosoin and the Buddhist Monk Xuanzang 玄奘三蔵,” dealing with a manuscript of Fascicle 4 of the *Discourse on the Theory of Consciousness-only* (Ch., *Cheng weishi lun*; J., *Jōyūishiki ron*) preserved in the Shōgozō, a sutra repository within Tōdai-ji Temple. In this article, I proposed that the abovementioned manuscript was a gift from the Chinese priest Xuanzang (602–664) to his Japanese disciple Dōshō (629–700) on Dōshō’s return to his home country. I also suggested that the date listed on the reverse of the end of the scroll – the 27th day of the 10th month of 659 (Xianqing 4) – was likely the approximate date of completion of the translation of this fascicle into Chinese.

Subsequently, the possibility was proposed that this fascicle was copied by Xuanzang’s disciple and founder of the Faxiang (J., Hossō) sect, the priest Kuiji (632–682; J., Kiki or Jion Daishi), a theory that was met with great excitement as there is no other confirmed extant calligraphy in the hand of Kuiji. However, this author cannot conclusively support such a hypothesis because the manuscript contains a number of rudimentary errors, such as mistaken or missing characters. To assign the brushwork to Kuiji, in fact, would call seriously into question the level of scholarship and understanding of this eminent Buddhist leader.

In order to investigate this problem, I reconsidered the scroll together with the *Shindō Jōyūishiki ron*, thought to be the most reliable revised edition of *Discourse on the Theory of Consciousness-only*, as well as with the Nara-period manuscript of the scripture owned by the temple of Ishiyama-dera. I conclude that, though my previous criticisms of its calligraphy have not necessarily been entirely accurate, the mistakes seen in the Shōgozō manuscript are of too fundamental a nature to have been made by Kuiji. I also determine that the variations in the translation dates given in the Shōgozō manuscript, the Ichiyama-dera manuscript, and the *Shindō Jōyūishiki ron* reflect different stages in the translation process. The date given on the Shōgozō manuscript corresponds to the completion of the translation of Fascicle 4; the date on the Ichiyama-dera manuscript marks the conclusion of Fascicle 10; while the date on the *Shindō Jōyūishiki ron* tells us when the revision of the entire translated scripture was finished.

(English translation by Melissa M. Rinne)