

Reviewing Ancient Chinese Calligraphies in relation to the *Fude* Writing Brushes and Manuscripts in the Shosoin

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This paper attempts to review ancient Chinese calligraphies, in relation to the ancient *fude* writing brushes and manuscripts preserved in the Shosoin Repository. The author was involved in the recent special investigation focusing on the Shosoin writing brushes⁽¹⁾, and gained the understanding on the relationship between the function of the *fude* and manuscripts. The type of *fude* discussed here is *yū-shin-hitsu* (有芯筆), literally means a writing brush with core hair – also known as *maki-fude* (卷筆). During the investigation, the practicability of the Shosoin *fude* was proved through the experiment with replicated *yū-shin-hitsu*, and the distinct characteristics of the brushstroke attributed to *yū-shin-hitsu* were identified. Such characteristics are observed with the written characters in the Shosoin manuscripts.

Firstly, this study focused on the “*Daisho-o Shinseki Cho* 大小王真跡帳” and the “*Fujiwara-ko Shinseki Byōbu Cho* 藤原公真跡屏風帳” among the five volumes of the “*Todai-ji Kenmotsu Cho* 東大寺獻物帳” (lit. lists of precious articles dedicated to the Todai-ji Temple). These two lists have been regarded as handwritten by a same person, and show the characteristics identifiable as use of *yū-shin-hitsu*. For a comparative review, the author selected Wang Xizhi’s “*Lanting Xu* 蘭亭序” among ancient Chinese calligraphies, in which one can see the influence on these two lists. Considering the first, second and third copies of the eight columns of “*Lanting Xu*”, “*Daisho-o Shinseki Cho*” and “*Fujiwara-ko Shinseki Byōbu Cho*” have the most prominent similarity to the third copy. The third copy is likely to have been written with *yū-shin-hitsu*, based on the identifiable characteristics. Furthermore, it is highly valuable as a work denoting the characteristics of the Tang Dynasty or earlier.

Secondly, for a comparative review, the author focused on Emperor Shomu’s “*Zasshu* 雜集” and compared it with Chu Suiliang’s “*Yan Ta Sheng Jiao Xu* 雁塔聖教序” among the Chinese calligraphies similar to “*Zasshu*”. “*Zasshu*” displays the characteristics attributed to the use of *yū-shin-hitsu*. “*Yan Ta Sheng Jiao Xu*” may have also been written with *yū-shin-hitsu*, based on the same identifiable characteristics as those apparent in “*Zasshu*”. In the past, the brushstroke seen with some characters in the “*Yan Ta Sheng Jiao Xu*” were considered to have been from later addition and correction, but this may also have resulted from the use of *yū-shin-hitsu*. In addition, Chu Suiliang’s “*Fang Xuanling Monument* 房玄齡碑” was also likely to have been written with *yū-shin-hitsu*.

Furthermore, some characteristics that have been considered in the past as personal or those of specific writing style are conceivably due to the use of *yū-shin-hitsu*. It is necessary to revisit not only Chinese calligraphies, but also the Japanese writings (*kanji* and *kana* characters) from the point of *fude* brushes used for them.

(1) Hino, N., Arai, T., Hashimoto, T., Fujino, U., and Mukaikubo, K. 2021. Report on a special investigation of the Shosoin Treasures—writing brushes. *Bulletin of Office of the Shosoin Treasure House* 43: 1–58.

The *Kasen* Felt Rug No. 17 Replica Project

Jorie Johnson

This paper explains the project of reproducing a mid-8th CE multi-color floral design felt rug, known as *kasen* (ka: 花 figured, sen: 氈 floor covering), of which over thirty rare examples are housed in the Nara Shosoin Repository. The purpose of the replication was to test my hypothesis about the design techniques used to create the embedded motifs based on my knowledge of traditional felt rug making techniques, and duplicate the procedure using modern materials and tools.

The Shosoin *kasen* have been scientifically and technically studied extensively in recent years. Microscopic identification of fiber confirmed the material used for the rugs to be sheep's wool similar to that which is characteristic of a type of sheep still widely domesticated in central Asia and Mongolia⁽¹⁾. Following this research, Masumi Honde and I were further involved in a preliminary study aiming to replicate a patterned felt rug in which the quality of ancient wool⁽²⁾ and the feltmaking techniques⁽³⁾ were examined in great detail.

Kasen no. 17 was chosen for the project because it was considered to be a good illustrative example due to its variety of colorful floral designs using “prefelt” –a lightly fulled white felt sheet. Honde judged that the quality of fiber used for the base of *Kasen* no. 17 is most similar to that from the Fat-tailed sheep, a typical carpet wool still actively produced throughout Central Asia today. To expedite the process, the wool came industrially washed and crudely carded from a Turkish factory. The percentage of total shrinkage of the replica, which depended on the condition of wool for the base, was only 10%.

As a material, prefelt has the advantage of strength and maneuverability in the dye bath as compared to a bunch of wool staples. For this project, Sappanwood, Indigo, and Japanese Pagoda were used for dyeing the sheets of prefelt. It can be rapidly cut into strips and used to illustrate motifs such as borders and vines. If clipped again at an angle, the element takes on a 3 or 4-sided leaf form, which still being a soft felt, has the potential to become integrated into the wool base during the next fulling process. Furthermore, by slightly stretching the soft cut forms, leaves were artfully made and simultaneously laid directly onto a damp woven mat so that the intricate design was arranged face down. Once the intricate design was prepared, the slightly greasy, fluffed, white base wool was carefully placed on top and by its weight stabilized the design elements during the agitation stage. The replica example made was thoroughly wetted with only hot water during the process. The initial agitation was executed by rolling the tied-off mat bundle under forearm pressure, then later by kicking and rolling it out of doors, both traditional techniques used today. Despite using modern tools, the traditional procedures that I have witnessed and researched across the Silk Road were adopted as much as possible.

Theoretically, the longer the rug is fulled, the deeper the design will integrate into the base wool. Integration depends on such factors as the quality of the prefelt and base wool, as well as the experience of the maker. Varied and numerous samples were necessary to determine the ideal characteristics of such variables as wool base and motif type, colorations, design cutting tactics, the thicknesses of the prefelt and of the example rug, which was only 6mm, the initial percentage of shrinkage of the prefelt before dyeing, and the actual total shrinkage of the rug.

In summary, the *Kasen* no. 17 replica project offered practical insights into the similarities in the manufacture of felt rugs in workshops across Central Asian nations then and now.

- (1) Takenouchi, K., Okumura, A. Fukunaga, S. Mukaikubo, K. Sanemori, Y. Johnson, J. and Honde, M. 2015. Report on a special investigation of the Shosoin Treasures—identification of animal hairs. *Bulletin of Office of the Shosoin Treasure House* 37: 1–112.
- (2) Honde, M. 2020. Analysis of the Shosoin *kasen* felt rugs with floral designs: materials. *Bulletin of Office of the Shosoin Treasure House* 42: 1–40.
- (3) Johnson, J. 2020. Analysis of the Shosoin *kasen* felt rugs with floral designs: feltmaking techniques. *Bulletin of Office of the Shosoin Treasure House* 42: 41–64.

Reproduction Project of *Shitōzu* Socks

Toshiaki Yano

This paper reports on the reproduction project of a pair of socks, *shitōzu*, for a flute player (South Section 124, No. 75) conducted in 2020. The Shosoin houses a great number of *bugaku* (lit. dance and music performance) costumes produced in the mid–8th century including this socks. The *shitōzu* is constructed of a warp-faced compound weave (*tate-nishiki*) silk with floral patterns on a purple ground for the outer fabric; and a white plain-weave silk for the lining. One of the pair still retains a length of red tie to fasten around the ankle. On the lining, there is an original inscription written in *sumi* ink, indicating that this was used by a flute player in a *gigaku* performance staged during the Consecration Ceremony for the Great Buddha of Todai-ji Temple on April 9th in 752.

Through a preliminary study for the reproduction, we closely examined the object in order to clarify the weave density, thickness of yarns and dyed colors of the fabrics used; the construction, cutting specifications and sewing technique; as well as the inscription. The original *shitōzu* retains distortions and stains related to the original use; damages and losses through ageing; and creases from previous storage. These changes in its condition were carefully inspected and its original state was assessed. Prior to this reproduction, a replica of the *tate-nishiki* with floral patterns on a purple ground was already woven in 2001. It was predetermined to use a portion of this replica fabric for this occasion. This fabric measures 56.4 cm in width, which was the standard width of silk fabric in the Nara Period. The author also examined this replica fabric to understand its physical characteristics such as weight and stiffness; and estimate the length necessary for constructing the pair by planning how to lay out the patterns of the socks.

Based on the findings through the preliminary survey, the *shitōzu* reproduction project involved making the patterns of the socks; accurately duplicating the fabric cutting; preparing the same sewing threads; and employing the same hand-sewing technique. The project was directed by Sengiren Co., Ltd. represented by the author, and the inscription was replicated *in situ* by Toshiyuki Arai, calligrapher.

Togidashi Polishing Technique Seen on Urushi Lacquerwares in the Shosoin

– Focusing on Examination of *Kingin Hyōmon Kin* Zither

Yukako Yamagata

An ancient *Kin* (琴) zither known as “*Kingin Hyōmon Kin*” (North Section 26) has been preserved in the Shosoin Repository. This zither is elaborated with *urushi* lacquer technique called *hyōmon* (平文) with intricate gold and silver cutouts. Despite not being listed in the “*Kokka Chinpo Cho*” (lit. the List of the Nation’s Rare Treasures), the inscription on the zither suggests that this was possibly made around the same period as other Shosoin treasures. In the past, there have been various theories on the differences between *heidatsu* (平脱) and *hyōmon*, both of which are the ancient decorative techniques for *urushi* lacquering. Norimitsu Kimura defined the two techniques⁽¹⁾ as follows; and concluded that these two terms were distinguished in the ancient time. He identified that in the *hyōmon* technique, the overall lacquered surface was polished to reveal the imbedded metal cutouts (*togidashi* polishing technique), and resulted in glossy smooth surface. He explained that, in the *heidatsu* technique, the topmost lacquer layer was peeled away only from the imbedded cutouts, and the lacquered surface retains mat appearance.

Based on Kimura’s theory, this paper further discusses the characteristics of the *hyōmon* technique by presenting findings through macroscopic examination by the author. Firstly, the study points out the evidences of *togidashi* polishing techniques on the *Kingin Hyōmon Kin* by looking at the *urushi* lacquer layers as well as the surface conditions of gold and silver cutouts. Secondly, the study examined the lacquered hilt and sheath of three swords from the 8th century, and confirmed that the same type of decorative technique was applied there. Furthermore, the similar decorative technique is found to be also used for a well-known sword, *Kingin-denso no Kara-tachi* (North Section 38). It became apparent that all of these five treasures have the foundation of black *urushi* lacquer, to which amber-colored *urushi* lacquer was further applied by repeating a process of coating and polishing the entire surface. The polished surface retains unevenness in the manner of contour lines, which is in common with all these artifacts. Through this study, it is evident that the *togidashi* polishing technique was established in the ancient time.

(1) Kimura, N. 1988. *Heidatsu* and *hyōmon* in the Nara period. In *Urushi: Urushi Study Group, June 10–27, 1985, Tokyo*, Brommelle, N. S. and Smith, P. eds. Getty Conservation Institute, 37–50.