

THE 70th ANNUAL EXHIBITION OF SHŌSŌ-IN TREASURES

October 27 — November 12, 2018

Greetings

In the autumn of 1946, the Imperial Household Museum of Nara (now Nara National Museum) held a Special Exhibition of Shōsō-in Treasures opening up the treasures to a broad, general audience. Seen as a symbol of the new era of post-war Japan, the exhibition received favorable reviews and was held again the next year, until eventually the annual exhibition, of which this year is the seventieth, became a familiar feature referred to as “The Exhibition of Shōsō-in Treasures.”

From the approximately nine thousand Shōsō-in treasures, this year’s exhibition displays ten from the North Section, sixteen from the Middle Section, twenty-seven from the South Section and three from the Shōgozō. Among them, ten include items have never been exhibited previously. That every year new pieces are included in the display, even though up till now Shōsō-in exhibitions have displayed a total of five thousand treasures (including repeats), shows just how numerous the treasures are that have been carefully preserved and transmitted. The very existence of this rare inheritance called the Shōsō-in treasures passed down successively over an extremely long time never ceases to amaze.

This year’s exhibition is designed to provide a general overview of the Shōsō-in treasures. A particular focus reflects the results of a special investigation into the bast-fiber items conducted by the Office of the Shōsō-in of the Imperial Household Agency from the fiscal year of 2013 to that of 2015.

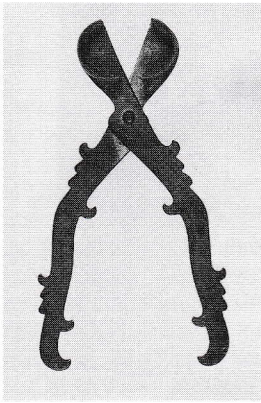
The display this time is also characterized by the imported items that come not only from Tang, China, such as the Eight-Lobed Mirror Decorated with Mother-of-Pearl on the Back and Embroidered Shoes associated with Emperor Shōmu and Empress Kōmyō, but also from the Kingdom of Silla on the Korean peninsula, such as the *Sahari* Stacking Bowls and a Wrapper for a Commentary on the *Flower Garland Sutra*.

In addition, the variety of treasures encompasses luxury items created with unstinting use of precious materials, including an Octagonal Offering Box Decorated with Tortoiseshell and Mother-of-Pearl, an Offering Box with Marquetry, Gold Painting on Aloeswood and Colored Paintings, and a Rhinoceros Horn *Nyoi* Decorated with *Bachiru* and Carved Ivory. It also contains printed bags for folding screens made from bast-fiber fabrics that had been submitted as tax payments, as well as documents that relate various aspects of society and of real life in the Nara-period.

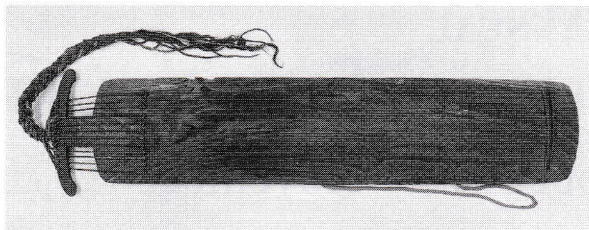
Hopefully, through these many great treasures, you will be able to catch a glimpse of the past with its active international exchange and its high cultural achievements.

Finally, we wish to express our deep gratitude to the Office of the Shōsō-in of the Imperial Household Agency for its kind cooperation, as well as to all the others involved in mounting the exhibition.

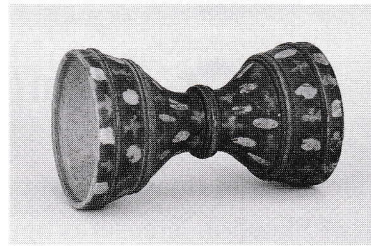
Nobuyuki Matsumoto
Director, Nara National Museum
October, 2018



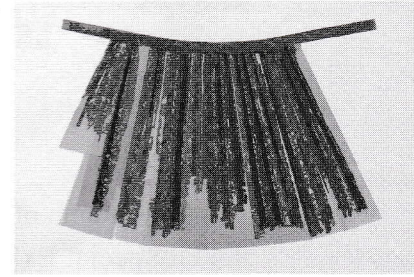
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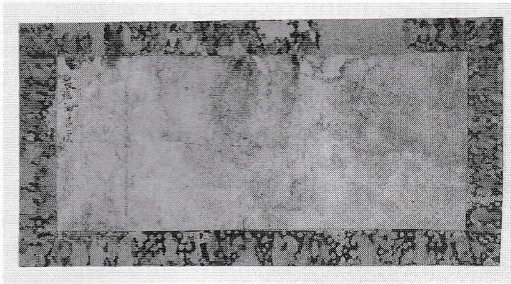
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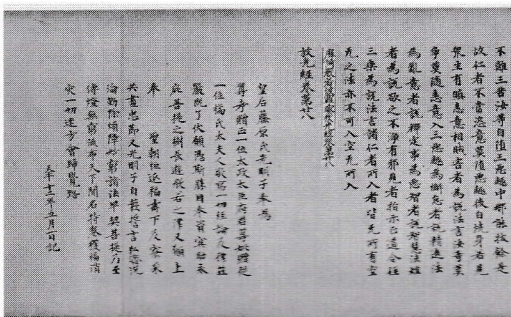
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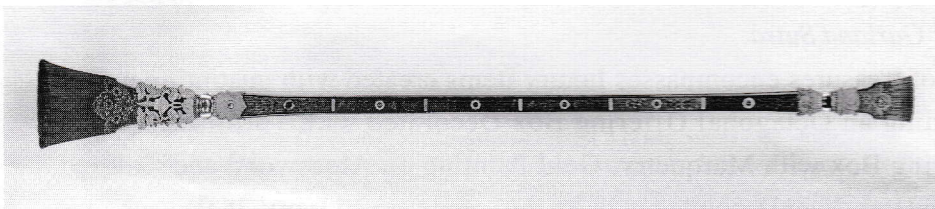
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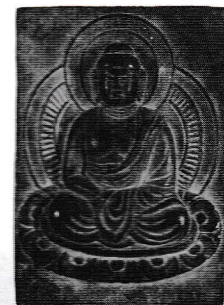
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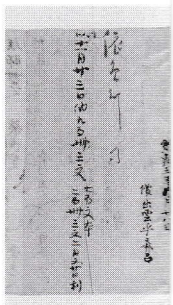
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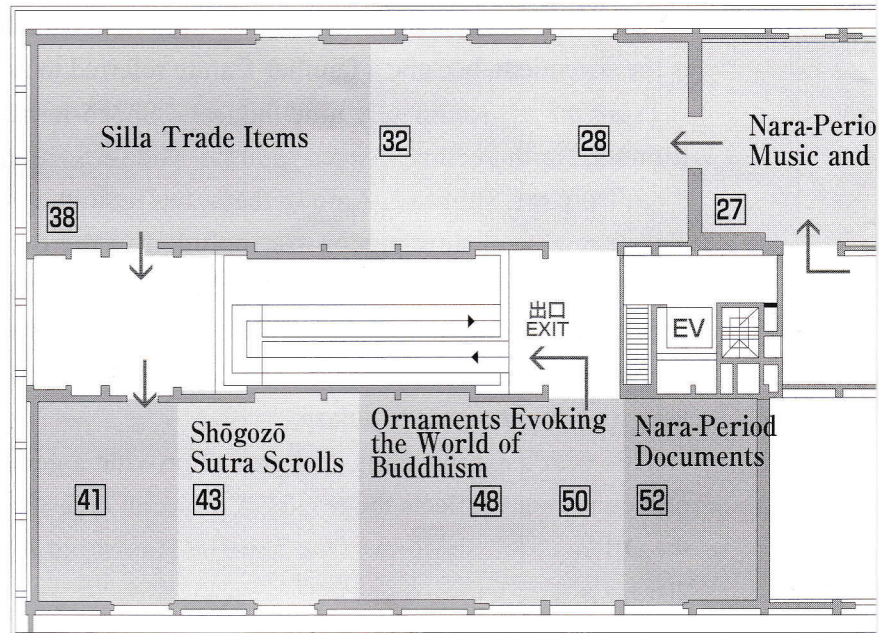
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Introduction to the Shōsō-in Exhibition

The Shōsō-in Repository

The Shōsō-in Repository was originally one of several repositories belonging to the temple of Tōdaiji. Built in a log-cabin construction (*azekurazukuri*) using three-faceted timbers interlocking at the corners of the building, it is thought to probably date to some time between 741 and 750. The Repository consists of three adjacent buildings known by their placement as the North Section, Middle Section, and South Section. Although originally *shōsō* was meant to store grain, already in the Nara period (710-794), the Tōdaiji Shōsō-in held valuable treasures. These treasures have been protected over the centuries because the building was kept locked under imperial seal, the times when it was opened being strictly monitored by the Tōdaiji priests and imperial

household officials. Today the Office of the Shōsō-in under the Imperial Household Agency administers the Repository.

The Treasures in the Shōsō-in

The treasures stored in the Shōsō-in Repository came there for various reasons and purposes, but can be broadly divided into those that were dedicated to the Great Buddha or to other Buddhist icons in Tōdaiji and those that were religious implements or documents used at Tōdaiji. Dedicatory objects include the personal belongings of Emperor Shōmu (701-756, r. 724-749) that his wife, Empress Kōmyō (701-760), offered to the Great Buddha in 756, and offerings from the imperial and aristocratic families for the Consecration Ceremony of the Great Buddha, which took place in 752. The Buddhist implements used at Tōdaiji include objects for offerings used during rituals and decorative items

Annual Exhibition of Shōsō-in Treasures



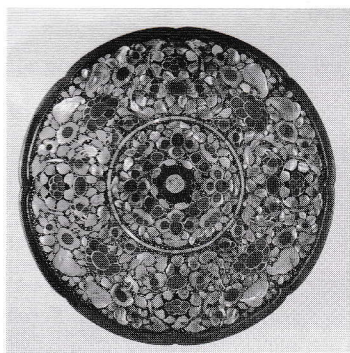
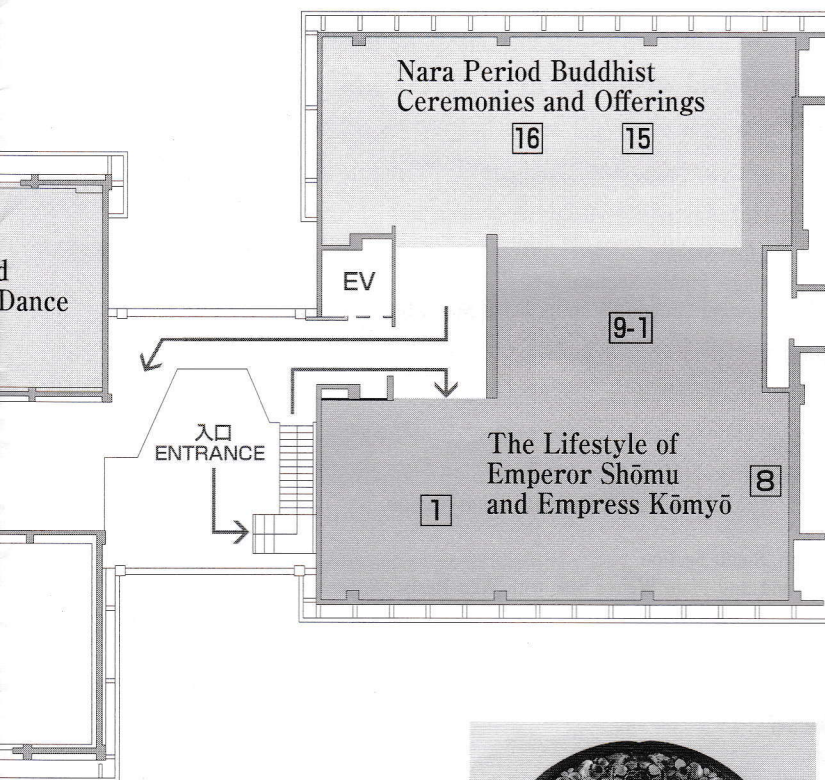
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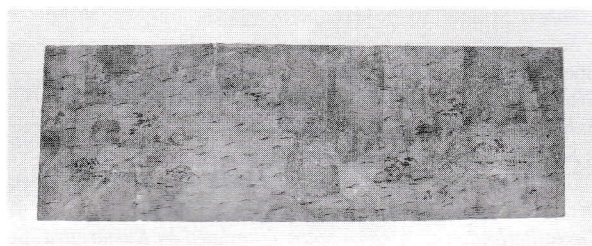
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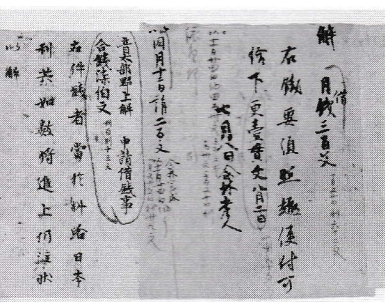
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adorning worship halls, as well as the tools used by the Tōdaiji Construction Bureau and the scriptorium along with their written records. In addition, the inclusion of ritual tools used in palace rites suggests the broad scope of the items stored in the Repository.

The Number, Dating and Provenance of the Treasures

Today, the number of treasures in the Repository is said to be about 9000, counting bundles of related objects as single pieces. It is thought that 95 per cent of these were made in Japan during the Nara period, but one also finds items of the same period imported from various Asian countries, such as Tang dynasty China, and the Korean kingdom of Unified Silla, as well as items that traveled through China from Sassanian Persia and South East Asia. The great majority date to the 8th century, though a few are from preceding centuries and some others

from later centuries.

The Shōsō-in Exhibition

The Repository is opened for about two month each autumn, during which time the treasures are inspected and research conducted. At the same time Nara National Museum holds a public exhibition of some sixty to seventy previously selected items. In selecting these items consideration is given to presenting an overall view of the treasures and to items reflecting recent research or comprehensive implications. The first public Shōsō-in exhibition took place in 1946. As a rule, ten or more years must pass before any given item is displayed again, so every year presents a new set of treasures.

The 70th Annual Exhibition of Shōsō-in Treasures

List of Entries

List of Works

Items that are marked with an asterisk [*] include items which have never been exhibited previously.

1. Eight-Lobed Mirror Decorated with Mother-of-Pearl on the Back. North Section.
2. Lacquered Leather Mirror Box for Item 1. North Section.
3. Round Bronze Mirror with Birds, Beasts, and Flowers on the Back; With a White Plain Weave Silk Sash. South Section.
4. Lacquered Leather Mirror Box for Item 3. South Section.
5. Screen Panel with Clamp-Resist (*Kyōkechi*) Design of Leafy Plants and a Figure. North Section.
- 6-1. Printed Bast-Fiber Bag for a Folding Screen. North Section.
- 6-2. Printed Bag for a Folding Screen Made of Hemp and Ramie.* North Section.
7. Bolt of White Bast-Fiber Cloth (*Chō* Tax Cloth). Middle Section.
8. Landscape Painted on Ramie Cloth. Middle Section.
- 9-1. Embroidered Shoes. North Section.
- 9-2. Embroidered Shoes. North Section.
10. Three Penknives in a Clustered Sheath. North Section.
11. Roller for Multicolored Cords (*Hyakusakuru*) to Ward off Evil. North Section.
12. Multicolored Silk Cord; With a Braid.* South Section.
13. Old Chest.* South Section.
14. Crossed Sashes for Holding Down a Chest Cover.* South Section.
15. Octagonal Offering Box Decorated with Tortoiseshell and Mother-of-Pearl. Middle Section.
16. Offering Box with Marquetry, Gold Painting on Aloeswood and Colored Paintings. Middle Section.
17. Lobed Offering Table with Silver Painting of Birds and Flowers on a White Pigment Ground; With its Table Mat. Middle Section.
18. Eight-Lobed Lacquer Offering Table. Middle Section.
19. Bicolored Ceramic Bowl. South Section.
20. Lacquer Bowl.* South Section.
21. Silver Bowl Set in a Base. South Section.
22. Hemp Tiger Costume Head Cover; With a Fragment of a Sash. South Section.
23. Red Plain Weave Silk Headdress; With Gilt Bronze Decorations. South Section.
24. Gilt Bronze Bird and Floral Scroll Ornaments for Performance Headdresses, with Cloud-Shaped Cutouts. South Section.
25. Gilt Bronze Frame for a Performance Headdress. South Section.
26. Light Green Plain Weave Silk Jacket (*Ōshi*) with Tie-Dye (*Kōkechi*) Design. South Section.
27. Skirt Sewn in Flared Strips of Green Twill Damask, Purple Twill Damask and Red Plain Weave Silk with Wax-Resist (*Rōkechi*) Design. South Section.
28. Tricolor Ceramic Hourglass-Shaped Drum Body. South Section.
29. Remains of Drum Skins for an Hourglass-Shaped Drum. South Section.
30. Zither (*Kin*); With a Fragment of a Seven-String Musical Instrument. South Section.
31. Moveable Bridges for Zithers (*Sō*). South Section.
32. Old Korean-Style Zither (*Shiragi-Goto*); With Tuning Bridges. North Section.
33. Record of Items Removed from and Put in the Repository. North Section.
34. Floral Patterned Felt Rug. Middle Section.
35. Purple Felt Rug. North Section.
- 36-1. *Sahari* Spoons. South Section.
- 36-2. *Sahari* Spoons. South Section.
37. Shell Spoons. South Section.
38. White Bronze Candlewick Clippers. South Section.
39. *Sahari* Stacking Bowls. South Section.
- 40-1. *Sahari* Stacking Bowls, South Section.
- 40-2. Silla Document Accompanying the Stacking Bowls. South Section.
41. Wrapper for a Commentary on the *Flower Garland Sutra* (Sk. *Avatamsaka Sūtra*, Ch. *Huayan Jing*, J. *Kegonkyō*). Middle Section.
42. *Great Perfection of Wisdom Sutra Translated by Kumārajīva*, Scroll 5 (Tang Sutra).* Shōgozō.
43. *Great Perfection of Wisdom Sutra Translated by Wuluocha*, Commissioned by Empress Kōmyō, Scroll 28.* Shōgozō.
44. "Record of Sutras Borrowed for Copying the *Sutras of the First Day of the Fifth Month (Gogatsu Tsuitachikyō)*" in the *Newly Revised Collection of Old Documents in the Shōsō-in (Zokuzokushū Shōsō-in Komonjo)*, Case 16, Scroll 8.* Middle Section.
45. *Bussetsu Tokkō Taishikyō*, a Nara-Period Copy of a Sutra about Shakyamuni's Former Life.* Shōgozō.
46. Handscroll Roller Rods. Middle Section.
47. Handscroll Roller Ends. Middle Section.
48. Rhinoceros Horn *Nyoi* Decorated with *Bachiru* and Carved Ivory. South Section.
49. Tortoiseshell *Nyoi* With a Tag. South Section.
50. Proto-Form for a Relief Buddhist Image. South Section.
51. Banner with Painted Buddhist Figures. South Section.
52. "Monthly Loan Statements and Other Documents" in the *Newly Revised Collection of Old Documents in the Shōsō-in (Zokuzokushū Shōsō-in Komonjo)*, Case 40, Scroll 1.* Middle Section.
53. "Copy of Empress Regnant Kōken's Edict, Statement from Osada no Himatsuribe no Atai Jingo, and Other Documents," in the *Collection of Old Documents in the Shōsō-in (Shōsō-in Komonjo Seishū)*, Scroll 44. Middle Section.
54. "Household Register of Yoboro Village in Nakatsu District, Buzen Province" in the *Revised Collection of Old Documents in the Shōsō-in (Zokushū Shōsō-in Komonjo)*, Scroll 7. Middle Section.
55. "Account Book for Yamashiro Village in Enuma District, Echizen Province" in the *Newly Revised Collection of Old Documents in the Shōsō-in (Zokuzokushū Shōsō-in Komonjo)*, Case 44, Scroll 4. Middle Section.
56. "Repository Record of Relief Stock and Tax Registers from Echizen Province" in the *Collection of Old Documents in the Shōsō-in (Shōsō-in Komonjo Seishū)*, Scroll 27. Middle Section.