

HIROYA, Himeka. Reconsidering the Production Date of *Shokkō* Red Silk Brocades from Hōryū-ji Temple: Based on Comparison with Eastern Eurasian Textiles

A group of “*Shokkō*” red silk brocades has long been passed down at Hōryū-ji Temple in Ikaruga, Nara Prefecture. The most famous examples of these textiles are those now held in the Hōryū-ji Treasures collection at the Tokyo National Museum. They fall into three descriptive categories: Brocade with Hexagonal Pattern and Flowers on Red Ground; Brocade with Lions and Phoenixes and Circles on Red Ground; and Brocade with Pearl Roundels and Flowers in Small Lattice on Red Ground. In this paper, I focus on the latter two categories of brocade, which have influenced our understanding of the production date of *Shokkō* brocade generally. Although these brocades have garnered scholarly attention, individual studies are still insufficient; this paper’s purpose is to thus to reconsider the production date of these brocades along with their position in the history of ancient textiles in Eastern Eurasia through comparison with brocades excavated from several sites around the Tarim Basin in Xinjiang, China, and other brocades passed down in Japan.

Previous studies on the Hōryū-ji *Shokkō* brocades have proposed a late seventh to early eighth century date of production. The rationale for this is that the grave goods from a tomb in Astana and the Toyok Grottoes have almost the same design as the Hōryū-ji *Shokkō* brocades, and that tombstones excavated from adjacent sites bear the inscriptions of the second year of the Tang dynasty Qianfeng reign (667). To reassess the dating of these textiles, I first review the excavation of the tombstones that were used as dating criteria and point out the uncertainties of this approach, and instead put forward an analysis based on a survey of works in at the Tokyo National Museum and Tokyo University of the Arts’ University Art Museum in which I track the changes in the patterns and techniques of the two brocades in question in relation to the textual and material evidence found in the Astana tomb complex.

Regarding the former brocade, I point out two similarities: that of the lion pattern and Buddhist iconography of the Northern and Southern Dynasties; and that of the phoenix pattern and brocades excavated from the Astana tombs and supporting textual evidence in the latter half of the sixth century. Regarding the latter brocade, I point out its visual similarity with architectural decoration from the fifth through early seventh centuries and confirm the change in pattern composition from Pearl-roundel and Lattice Pattern to Pearl-roundel and Rosette Pattern.

I then consider the compositional method of the brocades. Chinese brocade changed from the warp-faced compound tabby to the warp-faced compound twill in the first half of the seventh century and then to the weft-faced compound twill (also known as Samit) in the latter half of the seventh century. I confirm a similar transition in weaving techniques in Japanese brocade, although it remains difficult to determine their exact place of production: the two types of brocade in question are warp-faced compound tabby, which I suggest indicates that they likely date from the late sixth to the early seventh century.

Finally, based on the above, I focus on how the interrelationship between the eastern Eurasian powers during the Northern and Southern Dynasties promoted changes in weaving techniques and patterns. In addition, I examine the background of the two types of brocade from extant literature, to support my chronological observation. I point out that the figurative character of the two types of brocade likely resulted from the pluralism of the time in China, where warp-faced compound tabby was woven with patterns of mixed Persian and Buddhist elements, and I propose that the cultural environs of the Sichuan region in the sixth century influenced the Hōryū-ji textiles’ conceptualization. In conclusion, I propose that these two types of brocade from Hōryū-ji Temple are closely related to those historically produced in the Sichuan region of China, and as such date these brocades to the late sixth or early seventh century.