

Judge's Commentary

HIROYA, Himeka

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

This article considers *Compound Nishiki Weave with Patterns of Beaded Medallions Enclosing Lions and Phoenixes on a Red Ground* and *Compound Nishiki Weave with Pattern of Beaded medallions and Floral Designs within Lattices on a Red Ground*, two works among the so-called Shu River silk (*shokkōkin*) textile fragments traditionally handed down at Hōryū-ji. These fragments have been thought to date from the latter half of the 7th century through the beginning of the 8th century. After reexamining earlier studies on the textiles, the author compared their motifs and construct with works excavated from the Astana tomb complex and Toyok Caves in Turfan and those traditionally preserved in Japan. On that basis, she then suggested that they actually may date to an earlier period, from the latter half of the 6th century through the beginning of the 7th century.

First, she re-read the tomb inscriptions at Astana that formed the basis for their dating in earlier studies, and confirmed the state of the burials at those same tombs. From that examination, she recognized that the tomb records from the latter half of the 7th century provide nothing more than a latest possible date for the similar textiles used as grave goods. In fact, their placement in the tombs and production dates could have occurred several decades prior to the date of the records. Continuing, she considered the lion, phoenix, and lattice motifs seen in the two ex-Hōryū-ji examples, confirmed the motif stylistic changes that occurred primarily in examples excavated at Turfan, and indicated that all of them should be positioned in the latter half of the 6th century through the beginning of the 7th century. She then examined the weave structure, noting that both works are made of warp-faced compound weave on a tabby ground which reflects the weave structure changes that occurred in China. They can both be positioned within the early part of the ca. first half of the 7th century shift from warp-faced compound weave on a tabby ground to warp-faced compound weave on a twill ground weave. This technical timing underscores the surmised motif-based dating. The discussion of the above elements was extremely clear and precise, and with the added effective use of motif drawings, the article stands overall as a major step forward in ancient textile research.

She referred to lion depictions in Buddhist sculptures as part of her examination of motif style, while her lattice motif study noted similarities found in tiles. She consciously used new vantage points in her consideration of the dating and motif development for each form. However, she provided fewer examples in that discussion than she had in her comparison of the textiles themselves. We can anticipate further refinements on that point.

Finally, this article also presented a new outlook on what is known about the production and distribution of the *shokkōkin* textiles. Previously that discussion had been limited to indications of influence from the Sui and Tang dynasties. In addition to noting that the Sichuan region was the central silk textile production area during the Northern and Southern Dynasties through the Sui and Tang dynasties, she considered the history of diplomatic exchange, particularly the recently noted role of the Sogdians as intermediaries for trade and the introduction of Buddhism. She used various historical documents to trace the trends in Sichuan region silk textile production, how that production was transmitted to the Korean Peninsula and Japan, and how parallel changes in silk weave techniques occurred on the Asian continent and in Japan. While somewhat broadly-brushed, this article shows how the production and distribution of silk textiles can clearly assist our understanding of the true nature of that period's dynamic cultural exchange.

This article's lucidly asserted dating proposal for the ex-Hōryū-ji *shokkōkin* textiles will have a major impact on Japan's research on ancient textile history, this study can also be said to extend beyond the context of art history and will likely greatly stimulate Hōryū-ji research in terms of the Hōryū-ji establishment period and earlier.

For these reasons, we hereby award the Bijutsushi Prize to Hiroya Himeka for her efforts and achievements in this article.