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On the Original Form of the *Tenjūkoku-shūchō* and its Subject

This article presents a proposed reconstruction of the original form of the *Tenjūkoku-shūchō* (*Embroidery of Eternal Paradise*), traditionally handed down at Chūguji temple in Nara. The reconstruction is based on a survey of the cloth fragment ground of the embroidery and is followed by a new interpretation of the subject of the embroidery, based on iconographic interpretation.

What is known today as the *Tenjūkoku-shūchō* is a composite of a fragment of the Asuka period original and a supplemental fragment dating to the Kamakura period. This state of affairs has been indicated by earlier studies and the different ground colors of purple and white have been previously identified. The author of this study has posited that the purple ground was the main section (inner quadrant) of the *Tenjūkoku-shūchō*, while the white ground is the supplementary section (external quadrant). The author carefully observed the individual sections that are currently arranged in a haphazard combination, noting the directions of the warp and woof threads in each section, and, based on those findings, attempted a reconstruction of the original composition.

Next, the author reconstructed the iconography on the basis of historical documents and the iconographic fragments in order to determine the main subject of the textile. The main section, or inner quadrant, of the textile is centered on the "Shijūgūden" noted in the *Kōshiki* of the Taishi Mandala, which has been interpreted as the heavenly palace that occurs in the *Maitreya Sutra*, namely the Zenpōdō (Tosotsutengū). The author indicates the possibility, on the other hand, that the external quadrant is based on the

*Miroku daijōbutsu-kyō* (*Maitreya Sutra*) judging from the figural iconography of the two elderly people, the Buddhist temple and the figures inside buildings. Further clues are gained from the placement of the Kikkō Meimon (Tortoise Pattern) with the inscription of the three names, Prince Shōtoku, Princess Anahobe no Hashihito (Shōtoku mother) and Tachibana no Ōiratsume (Shōtoku's wife) on the main section of the textile. Indeed, the author posited that the positioning of the three names was like that of a triad of Buddhist deities, and thus suggests that these three names were objects of worship. Such hypotheses raise fascinating issues in terms of our consideration of worship of Prince Shōtoku. While areas for further examination remain in this iconographic interpretation, this article is praiseworthy as one attempt at resolving the stalemate in the iconographic study of the *Tenjukoku-shūchō*.

While earlier scholarship existed on the subject of the *Tenjukoku-shūchō*, this article takes those studies as its basis and advances the subject. In particular, while this study's close examination and survey of the visual details of the textile methods used in the work are based on subjective data, the research methods used in the analysis of the work are the most fundamental methods of art historical study, and have been persuasively used here to create a reconstruction proposal that adds elements of this work that have been previously overlooked or misinterpreted. Regarding the question of the subject matter of the work, the author presents new interpretations after a critical examination of previous scholarship on the subject. This article, based on the author's detailed and careful observation of the textile, is hereby judged to be worthy of the *Bijutsushi* Article Prize.