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Persian works of art in Japanese collections may be classified roughly into two categories: artifacts brought to Japan through China and the Korean peninsula in ancient, medieval, and early modern times, and those purchased in art markets since the 19th century. The first group is historically of great importance, since these objects were brought to Japan mainly by trade with China and western countries and give evidence of a cultural exchange between Persia and Japan that started as early as the 6th century C.E. The most important Persian artifacts of this type are held at two Buddhist temples in Japan—glass vessels and brocade fragment at the Shōsōin of Tōdaiji (Nara) and a silk tabard at Kōdaiji (Kyoto).

The 8th-century imperial treasures of the Shōsōin. The Shōsōin is a log storehouse of Tōdaiji Temple in Nara, the first permanent capital of Japan during the Nara Period (710-84). It was constructed at the command of Emperor Shōmu (r. 724-49), and after his death his belongings and household items were presented to this imperial repository by his widow, the empress Kōmyō. The most interesting of the artifacts stored there since the 8th century include exotic objects brought back from China by Japanese monks,

dignitaries, and envoys. Some of these artifacts traveled to China, Korea, and Japan from Persia, Central Asia, and India along the Silk Routes, the system of trade routes linking East Asia with the western world (Hayashi, pp. 85-103).

The most important such pieces among the Shōsōin relics are various types of glass vessels of Sasanian derivation, some with cut decoration or applied coil decoration. Especially noteworthy is a white glass bowl with circular facets (ht. 8.5 cm, diam. 12 cm; PLATE I). A similar bowl (repaired) of 8.1 cm height was excavated from the tumulus of Emperor Ankan (late 6th century) in Osaka. Additionally, a few fragments of glass bowls with similar cut decoration were excavated from the archeological sites in Kyoto (Fukai, 1972, pp. 306-12) and Fukuoka in Kyushu. Some of these bowls, rather than being post-Sasanian imitations of Persian wares, may actually have been produced in Persia during the Sasanian period and brought to Japan via the Silk Roads. A bowl with similar cut decoration found in Gilān Province, now in the Iran Bastan Museum (Muza-ye Irān-e Bāstān), Tehran, tends to substantiate this hypothesis both by the cutting technique and the style of circular decoration (Fukai, 1968, pp. 6-18).

In addition to the cut glass bowl of the Shōsōin, there is a pear-shaped ewer with a handle (ht. 27 cm, diam. 14 cm; PLATE II), the form of which is of Sasanian origin; it can be compared with ewers discovered in Gilān and Qazvin and kept at the Iran Bastan Museum. The chemical composition of these Shōsōin vessels and the bowl fragments is of alkaline-lime, with or without lead, according to Beta-ray backscattering examination.

Among the metalwork in the Shōsōin, the two items most noteworthy morphologically are of elongated, eight-lobed shape (PLATE III); they can be compared to a silver cup of similar shape (said to have been found in Qazvin) in the Iran Bastan Museum (Fukai, 1968, p. 117, fig. 69). Sasanian silver pieces with elliptical and multi-foliated shapespread extensively throughout Eurasia; and the prototype of these multi-lobed glass and metal vessels apparently goes back to the Sasanian period, though the provenance of some pieces is either Tang China or Central Asia. The eight-lobed gilt bronze cup in the Shōsōin, based on florescent X-ray analysis, is presumably a local imitation. Nevertheless, it is still an important indication of the intercultural communication between East and West.

An important textile in the Shōsōin is a fragment of silk brocade depicting confronted equestrians shooting lions set within a pearl roundel (PLATE IV).

This textile pattern that was originated in the Sasanian empire and diffused westwards to Europe and eastwards to China and Japan (Otavsky, pp. 185-95; Ackerman, pp. 3074-78, figs. 1138 and1139; see also ABRIŠAM).

Kōdaiji Temple. Commerce of the early modern period (before and during the Tokugawa shogunate, 1603-1867) is represented by a 16th-century Persian silk kilim in Kōdaiji Temple, Kyoto, as well as by Persian and Indian carpets preserved in the Tokugawa Museum, Nagoya. These presumably had been presented to the *daimyō*, the feudal lords. Frequent trade with Western countries such as Portugal, Spain, and the Netherlands during the 15th-17th centuries brought to Japan a number of exotic commodities such as glass and woolen products. These objects are assumed to have been either items of tribute or gifts presented to the rulers and high-ranking officials.

The 16th-century kilim at Kōdaiji Temple was later tailored into a tabard (*jinbaori*, a sleeveless coat worn over armor by the samurai; PLATE V(1); PLATE V(2)) for Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537?-98), one of the most powerful lords of Japan during the feudal age, in whose memory Kōdaiji was built in 1605. During the age of the Japanese civil wars (1467-1568) many of the daimyōs wore a tabard made of imported woolen fabric in bright colors and showy patterns. In Hideyoshi's case, the tabard was tailored from a Safavid silk kilim partly brocaded with silver and gold threads. The tabard is characterized by the designs of mythological beasts such as dragons, a variety of birds, animal combat scenes, and lion-masks. Interestingly, this tabard is closely related in its patterns, color scheme, and weaving density to the recently acquired silk kilim, formally called the Figdor kilim (Kāšān, 2nd half of the 16th cent.), in the Miho Museum. Their common features lead us to assume that both were woven in the same court workshop in Kāšān during the Safavid dynasty (Pope and Ackerman, XII, pl. 1268; Spuhler, pp. 84-87). The tabard and the Figdor kilim are associated with another piece, the Sanguszko Kermān carpet of the late 16th century, which is one of the masterpieces of Persian carpet weaving (Pope and Ackerman, XII, pl. 1206). These three pieces share the design repertoire of a Chinese dragon, phoenix, and *qilin* (an auspicious horned animal in Chinese mythology) along with the representation of animals in combat. The Sanguszko carpet, once owned by the Polish royal family, is now in the Miho Museum collection (Miho Museum, pp. 307-11).

The Kyoto preservation associations. Persian carpets figure among the decorations of the 32 float-carts (*yamaboko*) which are paraded in the traditional (since 892) July Gion Festival in Kyoto, which is associated with

Yasaka Shrine. Each of the 32 neighborhood float-cart preservation associations (*hozonkai*) is responsible for one of the floats and its trappings (assembly, cleaning, disassembly, storage), and their joint activities are coordinated through the Gion Festival Float-cart Federation (Gion Matsuri Yamaboko Rengōkai). Several of the associations, such as the Minami-Kannon-Yama Hozonkai and the Naginata-Boko Hozonkai, own Persian carpets. In the late 16th and 17th centuries the wealthy citizens of Kyoto, mostly textile dealers and artisans, vied with one another in purchasing luxurious imported textiles, some Chinese, some Persian and Indian, in order to adorn the huge Gion Festival floats. For the past five hundred years these festival trappings have been displayed to thepublic during the procession through the city (Gonick, pp. 183-209).

Among the float trappings are seven Persian pile carpets, five of which are of the so-called Herat type in exceptionally good condition, while two others are of the so-called Polonaise type made of silk with metallic threads. The piles of the latter two carpets are very worn. They may have been woven under Shah ʿAbbās I (r. 1587-1629) in Kāšān or Isfahan (Walker, pp. 173-74). Their present condition suggests that they may have been sold or given away to the townsfolk after having been used long enough by members of the ruling class. These carpets lack, however, the documentation to prove precisely how and when they were imported into Japan and transferred to their present owners.

Museums and research centers. The majority of the Persian artifacts that came to Japan from the 19th century onward were purchased after World War II. These consist of diverse types of ancient earthenware vessels, modern ceramics, tiles, and glassware. The appeal of earthenware and ceramics to the Japanese is well known; and the considerable quantity of Persian glassware in Japanese public and private collections may be explained by such an attraction, which dates back to the Shōsōin treasures. The following list of major museums and other institutions indicates the main types of their Persian holdings.

(1) National and regional museums. National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka: modern carpets and ceramics, ethnic art, and modern Persian handicrafts. Tokyo National Museum: ancient and Islamic ceramics, glassware, and textiles. Matsudo Museum, Chiba: glassware. Hiroshima Prefectural Art Museum: Islamic metalwork; of particular interest is a Saljuq bronze lantern. Nara International Foundation, commemorating the Silk Road Exposition (N. Egami and J. Gluck Collections): ancient earthenware and Islamic ceramics.

Yokohama Museum of Eurasian Cultures (N. Egami collection): ancient and Islamic pottery.

(2) Private museums founded by individuals. Bridgestone Museum of Art, Tokyo: ceramics; glassware. Eisei Bunko Museum of Art, Tokyo: Islamic ceramics; modern carpets. Hakutsuru Fine Art Museum, Kobe: Modern carpets. Matsuoka Museum of Art, Tokyo: ceramics. Miho Museum (Shumei Culture Foundation), Shiga: Achaemenid and Sasanian metalwork; glassware; Saljuq pottery; of particular interest are the Sanguszko carpet, Figdor silk kilim, luster-painted ware, and *mināʾi* wares. Ohara Museum of Art, Okayama: Islamic ceramics and tiles. Hirayama Ikuo Silk Road Museum, Yamanashi: silverware; glassware; tiles; textiles; coins. Tokugawa Art Museum, Nagoya: classical carpets. Toyama Memorial Museum of Art, Saitama: brocades; modern pile carpets. Yamato Bunkakan Museum, Nara: ceramics.

(3) Single-theme collections. Aichi Prefectural Ceramic Museum, Seto: prehistoric, ancient, and Islamic ceramics. Ancient Orient Museum, Tokyo: ancient pottery; clay figurines; Islamic ceramics and coins. Okayama Orient Museum: ancient and Islamic ceramics; tiles; glassware; coins; jewelry; seals; Sasanian metalware; Safavid and Qajar textiles; of particular interest are tiles from Taḵt-e Solaymān. Middle East Culture Center in Japan, Tokyo: prehistoric and ancient earthenware; bronze figurines; ancient and Islamic ceramics; tiles; Sasanian and Islamic metalwork; glassware; Safavid and Qajar textiles; miniature paintings; coins; of particular interest are a Sasanian silver plate with an equestrian hunting scene and a small prayer niche (*meḥrāb*) tile with the ninety-nine names (*al-asmāʾ al-ḥosnā* “beautiful names”) of Allāh.

(4) University collections. Hiroshima University: painted and burnished pottery; archeological materials. Tenri University Sankōkan Museum, Nara: Sasanian or proto-Sasanian silverware and Islamic pottery. Tokyo University Museum: painted pottery, glassware, and archeological materials. University of Tsukuba, Ibaraki: glassware, clay figurines, and archeological materials.

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