



人文科学研究院 Kyushu University, Graduate School of Humanities  
人文学国際研究センター International Research Center for the Humanities

# 九州大学 Transformation of East Asian Cloth: Transnational and Translocal Textiles

International Research Center for the Humanities 2020–21 Public Lecture Series  
Organizers: the International Research Center for Japanese Humanities, Kyushu University  
in collaboration with the Kyoto National Museum

**All presentations will be in Japanese** in a 70-minute Zoom Webinar; Q&A follows each lecture(s) event.  
Registration details are located at the bottom of this page.

**Session 1** | January 16, 2021 10:00 – 11:10 (JST), 1:00 – 2:10 (UTC)

**Transnational and Translocal Buddhist Textiles:**

***Kesa (Buddhist Robes) and Uchishiki (Altar Cloths) (50 mins.)***

**Speaker:** Yamakawa Aki, Chair of Dept. of Decorative and Applied Arts and Curator of Textiles,  
Kyoto National Museum

**Session 2** | January 23, 2021 10:00 – 11:10 (JST), 1:00 – 2:10 (UTC)

**Textile Transformations in *Chanoyu*, the Way of Tea (25 mins.)**

**Speaker:** Satoh Rumi, Curator, The Gotoh Museum

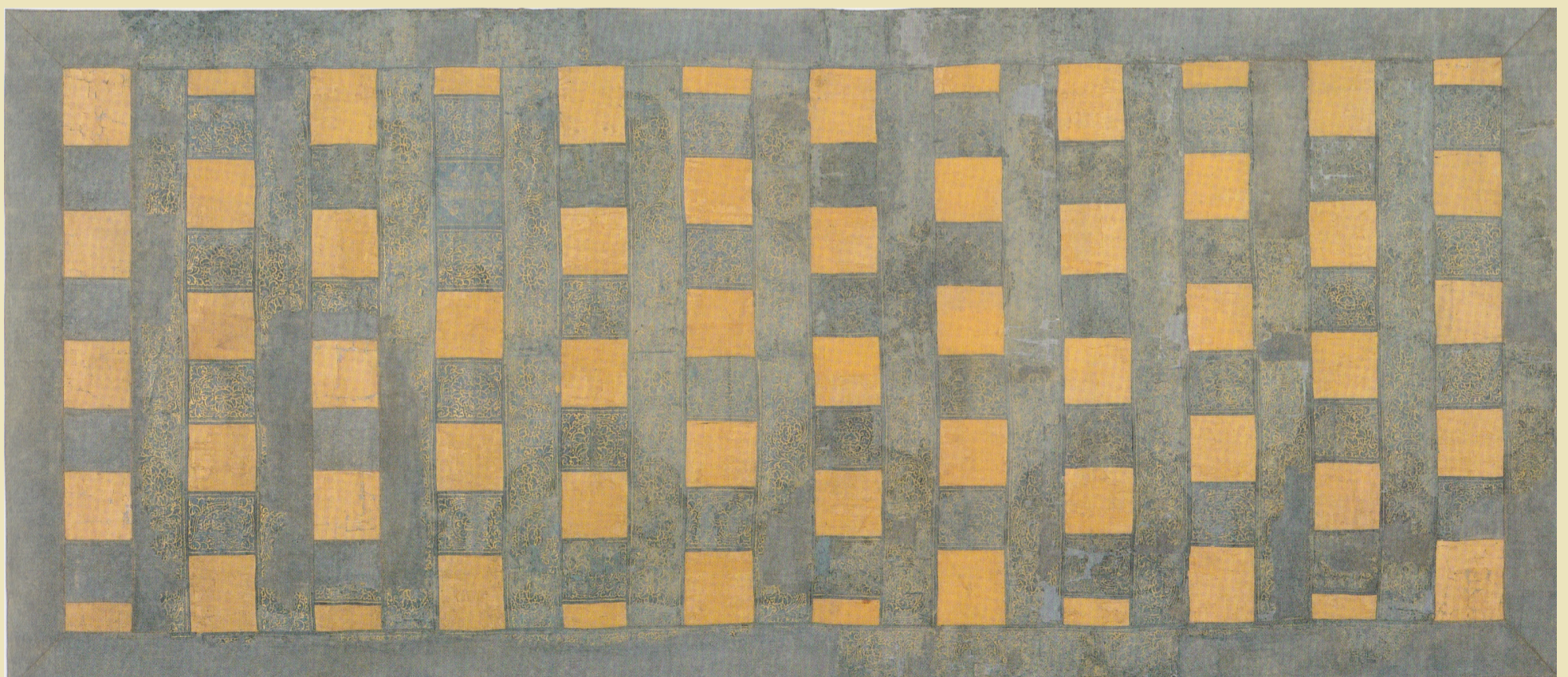
**Early Imported Textiles in Japan:**

**A Look at Gold Brocade Examples (25 mins.)**

**Speaker:** Kuwabara Yuzuko, Research Fellow, Kyushu National Museum

Please register using the link or the QR code.

[https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_4vj2CTuIRPiKqi6PITgIGQ](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_4vj2CTuIRPiKqi6PITgIGQ)



Important Cultural Property, Priest's Robe (Kesa) with Peony Scrolls and Crossed Vajras, known as "Dream Robe"  
14th century. Silk plain weave damask with twill patterning, gold painting. Kyoto National Museum

## “Transnational and Translocal Buddhist Textiles: *Kesa* (Buddhist Vestments) and *Uchishiki* (Altar Cloths)”

The Buddhist robe known as *kesa* (Sanskrit: *kāṣāya*) is a monastic vestment that also can serve as a material certification of the inheritance of the Buddhist *dharma* (teachings). Due to this profound significance there remain many *kesa* preserved in Japanese temples as heirloom treasures. Many of these *kesa* are *dharma* transmission robes (*denpō-e*) that Chinese priests bestowed on their Japanese disciples as important symbols. Such examples reveal that the original meaning of these textiles has been preserved even through their transnational movement from China to Japan.

In contrast, textiles known as *uchishiki*, cloths made to cover Japanese Buddhist altars, were traditionally made from the cloth of repurposed everyday garments of the deceased. Such textiles were never moved from Japan, but their function was transformed from the realm of secular society to the realm of the sacred. Here, by examining both textile forms, I will focus on the transgression of borders by Buddhist textiles.



**Dr. Yamakawa Aki** is a specialist in the history of East Asian textiles. She earned her M.A. in art history from Kobe University and her Ph.D. from Ochanomizu University. Previously, she was Curator at the Tokugawa Art Museum. Since 2001, she is Curator in charge of textiles at the Kyoto National Museum, where she is currently Chair of the Department of Decorative and Applied Arts and Chair of the Department of Exhibitions. She is also Visiting Professor, Graduate School of Human and Environmental Studies, Kyoto University. Her publications include the book *Chūkinsei senshokuhin no kisoteki kenkyū* (Basic Research on Medieval and Early Modern Textiles) (Tokyo: Chūō Koron Bijutsu Shuppan, 2015).

## “Textile Transformations in *Chanoyu*, the Way of Tea”

The traditional Japanese cultural practice of *chanoyu*, the Way of Tea, is a comprehensive art form comprising everything from the architecture of special tearooms, the preparation of *kaiseki* cuisine, to the careful selection of tea utensils. This care and attention also extends to the textiles used in *chanoyu*, as seen in mounting fabrics used for hanging scrolls and on the pouches used to house precious tea containers and tea bowls. It is notable that the *meibutsu*, or “famous utensils,” that have been prized over the centuries are often accompanied by imported fabrics from China, India, Persia, or elsewhere, imbuing them with a particularly international ambiance.

Such preference for transnational assemblages is a distinctive part of Japanese culture. This lecture will examine the imported textiles that are the subject of connoisseurship by tea practitioners, including so-called *meibutsu gire* (celebrated textiles). It will also discuss the demand for trade textiles to decorate the tearoom and discuss examples of *meibutsu gire* that were particularly influential in the Edo period.



**Satoh Rumi** is curator of the Gotoh Museum. Her research interests have focused particularly on the demand for and influence of imported textiles in Japan. She has curated a number of major special exhibitions for the Gotoh Museum, including *Meibutsu gire* (From Loom to Heirloom: The World of Meibutsu-gire Textiles) in 2001, *Kamakura Engakuji no meihō* (Forming Emptiness: Zen Masterpieces from the Engaku Temple, Kamakura) in 2006, *Kowatari sarasa* (Sarasa: Flowers of the Textile Trade) in 2008 and “*Embroidered Silk Patchwork Ōfukusa (Wrapping Cloth)*” in *Kokka* (No. 1494, 2020, Special Issue: The Founding of Engaku-ji) and *Meibutsu gire no kenkyū* (Research on Celebrated Meibutsu gire Textiles) (co-author, Kokusho Kankokai, 2018).

## “Early Imported Textiles in Japan: A Look at Gold Brocade Examples”

Many of the fabrics classified in Japan today as *meibutsu gire* (celebrated textiles) are woven with gold threads. This presentation will look at the history of the glittering gold brocaded (*kinran*) textiles made to accompany and house tea utensils used in *chanoyu*. The oldest extant Chinese textiles incorporating gold threads are not brocaded but instead embroidered or woven in tapestry weave. From around the Tang dynasty, however, a new type of textile was developed in which the gold threads would be woven into fabric as supplementary brocading wefts. It is this textile with gold supplementary patterning that we refer to today in Japan as *kinran*. This lecture will investigate how the creation of gold brocaded textiles influenced textile history and their subsequent developments over time.



**Dr. Kuwabara Yuzuko** is Research Fellow in charge of textiles in the Curatorial Division, Kyushu National Museum. She received her M.A. and Ph.D. in Art History from the Graduate School of Humanities at Kwansai Gakuin University. Previously she served as Curatorial Assistant for the Kwansai Gakuin University Museum, both before and after it opened in 2014. She also worked as Curator for Byōdoin Museum Hōshōkan before moving to her current post in 2018.

Background image: Fragment of “Tomita Kinran,” from a set of Meibutsu Gire (Celebrated Textiles) formerly owned by the Maeda Clan. 15th century, China. Silk twill with gold supplementary weft patterning. Kyoto National Museum.