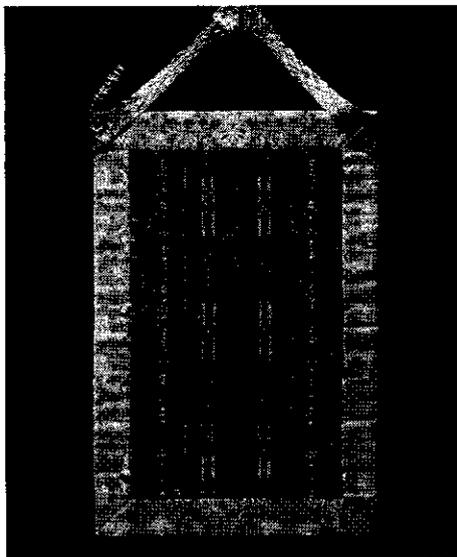


## Explanation of the Cover



### Jingoji temple Sutra Cover

Heian period (12th century)

Height : 31.0 cm.      Width : 47.3 cm.

Photograph by Maki Naomi

The photograph on the cover is a close-up detail of a Buddhist sutra cover made about 850 years ago.

This article is made from bamboo which has been split and whittled before being plaited with a variety of colored thread into a type of bamboo slat matting. Since ancient times, bamboo, found widely in tropical and subtropical Asia, has been used for an array of applications due to its appropriate firmness, good flexibility and beautiful grain. Many excavated articles for the latter part of the Jomon period (10th century BC-3rd century BC) in Japan were made from bamboo and a number of bamboo-ware handieraft items have survived at the Shosoin Treasure Repository built in the Nara period (8th century). According to documentation produced in the Nara period, bamboo matting and bamboo blinds were made utilizing the same method as that used in this sutra cover.

Bamboo slats dyed black with *sumi* ink have been plaited using red, orange, yellow, dark blue, blue, pale green and white thread. The separation and use of color groupings such as the warm color group-red, orange and yellow- and the cold color group-dark blue, blue and pale green-is referred to as *Ungen* initially *Ungen* was used to give an article dimension through color changes, without using the gradation method, by arranging sections of color into bands according to their tone. In the Nara period, though, this was used more as a means of harmonious subtle decoration, rather than to show depth and shape.

This article is bordered with a gorgeous *karako* (Chinese Children) design Japanese brocade and is lined with figured cloth. Mica has been inserted between the lining cloth and the bamboo slats, most likely as a form of moistureproofing. One can catch a glimpse of the sliver shine of the mica between the black bamboo slats in places, creating unadorned decorative beauty. The aesthetic sense of the Heian period where delicate change within brilliance was favored can be seen in this article.

Jingoji Temple, of the Shingon sect, is located on the mountainside of Mount Takao on the northwest outskirts of Kyoto. Mountain worship thrived in this area since ancient times and even today thousands flock to the area to view its beautiful autumn leaves. Apart from this sutra cover, the temple also houses other valuable cultural assets from the Heian and Kamakura periods.