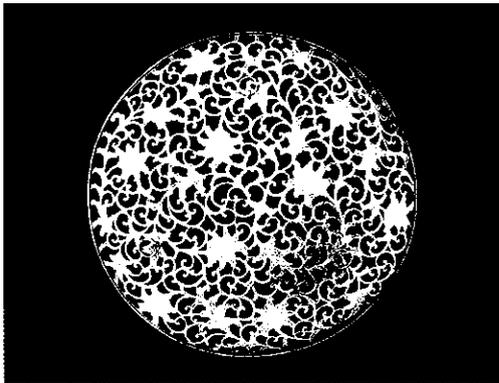


Explanation of the Cover



Gold and Silver Gilded Openwork Flower Basket

Kamakura period, ca. 12th-13th century

Diameter 28.5 cm., Depth 4.0 cm.

Jinshoji, Shiga prefecture

National Treasure

The cover photograph is an enlarged detail of a flower basket (*keko*) that was made about 800 years ago. This kind of container was used in the rite of scattering flowers (*sange*) during Buddhist ceremonies attended by many priests and worshippers. The scattering of flowers was originally done to honor the Buddha; pieces of paper in five colors symbolizing lotus petals were strewn in conjunction with the chanting of priests.

Keko can be made of bamboo, wood, lacquer, or metal. In this example, copper and lead sheet were molded into the shape of a dish. The surface was completely covered with an openwork design known as *hōsōge karakusa*—a combination of vine-scroll patterns and imaginary *hōsōge* flowers. The design was brought into relief by carving away the excess, a technique known as *sukibori* which gives it a distinctly three-dimensional quality. The flowers and vine-scroll pattern are roughly engraved. In addition to the gold gilding on both the outer and inner surfaces, silver was applied as accents to the flowers and leaves. The complex patterns were skillfully yet freely engraved, imparting a formal, graceful sense of beauty to this piece. Three rings were attached to the bottom for hanging thick cords.

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