Feature Exhibitions

The Treasures of Gakuen-ji Temple in Shimane
Hina Matsuri and Japanese Dolls
Masterworks of Kongo-ji Temple, Osaka
In 2012, the Kyoto National Museum presented *The Grand Izumo Exhibition*, a special exhibition commemorating the 1300th anniversary of the ancient chronicle *Kojiki* as well as the major rebuilding of Izumo Taisha Shrine. Izumo is home to the grand shrine and is a place often mentioned in ancient mythology, for which reason it is closely associated with Japan's native Shinto faith. The 2012 Izumo exhibition, however, examined not only the Shinto culture of this region but also its Shinto–Buddhist syncretic religion as well as its Buddhist culture from ancient times through the medieval period. With the generous cooperation of numerous shrines and temples as well as the Shimane prefectural government and the Shimane Museum of Ancient Izumo, the museum was able to introduce the spiritual culture of this part of Japan to numerous visitors.

While *The Grand Izumo Exhibition* may have done something to break down the perception of Izumo as a purely Shinto area, it by no means penetrated the depths of Buddhism in Sai’in, the region in which Izumo is located. This exhibition of treasures from Gakuen-ji helps to rectify this deficit.

Gakuen-ji is a Tendai sect temple in Shimane prefecture. It is hailed one of the sacred places in Japan in a late Heian period (circa 1180) anthology entitled *Ryōjin hishō* (Songs to Make the Dust Dance on the Beams), which was selected by Retired Emperor Goshirakawa. This reference tells us that by the late twelfth century, Gakuen-ji was already famous as a sacred site and temple among the people of Kyoto. (Continued on next page.)

*February 21–April 7, 2015*  
Heisei Chishinkan Wing, Gallery 1F-2

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The Kyoto National Museum, welcomes spring this year with a revival of its beloved annual exhibition of Japanese dolls, after a six-year hiatus during the rebuilding of the museum’s new wing. This year's selection includes emperor and empress dolls (*dairi bina*) and other *hina* dolls displayed on red felt, sometimes on multi-tiered altars. It also features palace dolls (*gosho ningyō*) and Saga dolls (*saga ningyō*), both representing children, as well as tiny Kamo dolls (*kamo ningyō*), with their simple but lively charm.

*Hina* dolls are associated with the Doll Festival, or *hina matsuri*, which takes place on March 3rd each year. Though widely considered to be an ancient ritual, the tradition of displaying and celebrating dolls on a specific day dates only to the early 1600s, in the Edo period. The Doll Festival originated as a purification rite that took place on the third day of the third month each year. Dolls originally functioned as *katashiro*—inanimate substitute representations used to absorb impurities and evils from actual people. These representations could then be floated away or otherwise destroyed, taking human pollutants with them. It was during the Edo period that such ritual objects were transformed into the luxurious figurines we know today.

Some types of Edo period *hina* dolls are named after the time periods with which they are associated, as in the Kan’ei dolls (*kan’ei bina*, named after the Kan’ei era, 1624–1645) or Kyōhō dolls (*kyōhō bina*, after the Kyōhō era, 1726–1736). The *jirōzaemon bina* dolls are named after a Kyoto doll maker, Jirōzaemon, who is credited with their design. The Kokin dolls (*kokin bina*) are considered to be a new Edo period innovation, while the courtier dolls (*yūsoku bina*) faithfully represent the costume and hair conventions of the aristocracy. This extensive selection of dolls offers you the opportunity to look carefully at differences in their details, including facial expressions, gestures, and costumes.

The highlights of the exhibition this year are the large central *hina* altars with pavilions—exemplifying a now-rare display style formerly found in Kyoto, Osaka, and other areas of the Kansai region. One of these is a newly donated ensemble commissioned for a baby girl in the year 1844. The significance of the Kyoto National Museum’s collection should be evident from the high quality of the works on view. We hope that its appeal will extend to visitors of all ages.

(By Yamakawa Aki, Senior Curator of Textiles, translated by Melissa Rinne)
(Continued from previous page.) Among the treasures preserved over the centuries in Gakuen-ji is a Standing Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva sculpture (Important Cultural Property) with an inscription dating it to 692, as well as a ninth-century finial from a priest’s staff (not on view), which was discovered on the temple grounds in a cave devoted to the mountain deity Zao Gongen. Such works tell us that Gakuen-ji was established as a monastery from the early part of the Heian period (794–1185). The name Gakuen-ji isn’t mentioned in writing, however, until the Kamakura period, when it appears in the 1213 Mandate to Gakuen-ji from the Administrative Office of Mudō-ji on Mt. Hiei on view in this exhibition. This document states that, upon the order of Retired Emperor Gotoba, the government official in Izumo province must allocate a large parcel of land to Gakuen-ji, to be divided into two precincts. The North and South Gakuen-ji precincts will be under the administration of the temple Mudō-ji on Mt. Hiei in Kyoto, to which each precinct must submit half the annual rice taxes.

With this mandate, Gakuen-ji effectively became a branch temple of Mudō-ji and an official member of the network of Tendai sect temples. Thereafter, Gakuen-ji joined Daisen-ji and Sanbutsu-ji in Hōki province as one of the three major temples of the San’in region.

This exhibition features various artworks from the temple including Buddhist and Shinto sculptures, some designated as Important Cultural Properties of the national or prefectural government. Most of these works are on view at the Kyoto National Museum for the first time, allowing us to consider Tendai Buddhist connections between Kyoto and Izumo in ways that were not covered in The Grand Izumo Exhibition. At the same time they reveal to us the fascinating history and appeal of Gakuen-ji Temple.

(By Suekane Toshihiko, Associate Curator of Metalwork, translated by Melissa Rinne)
ADMISSION

Adult ¥520 (¥410)
Univ. Student ¥260 (¥210)
*(Admission is free for youths of high school age and below)
*(Fees in parentheses are for groups of 20+)
*(These fees are for admission to the Collections Galleries only. Special Exhibitions require separate admission fees, which include admission to the Collections Galleries.)

HOURS

9:30 am–5:00 pm (Entrance until 4:30 pm)
*(During special exhibitions, these hours are extended until 6:00 p.m. Tuesday-Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday, and until 8:00 p.m. on Friday. Admission ends thirty minutes before closing time.)

CLOSED ON MONDAY
*(When Monday is a national holiday, the museum remains open on Monday and closes the following Tuesday.
*(The Museum will be closed December 24 (Wed.) to January 1 (Thu.), 2015.)

ACCESS

Via JR or Subway
Get off at Kyoto Station. From bus platform D2 in front of the station, take City Bus #206 or #208 to “Hakubutsukan Sanjusangendo-mae” bus stop. One-minute walk to the Museum.

Via Keihan Railway
Get off at Shichijo Station. Walk east along Shichijo/Nanajo Street (about seven minutes) to the Museum.

Via Hankyu Railway
Get off at Kawaramachi Station. Walk east over the bridge to the Keihan Railway Gionshijo Station. Take Osaka-bound Keihan train to Shichijo Station. Walk east along Shichijo/Nanajo Street (about seven minutes) to the Museum.

Thematic Exhibitions in
The Collection Galleries

Upcoming Exhibitions

Special Exhibition
Kano Painters of the Momoyama Period
Eitoku’s Legacy
April 7–May 17, 2015

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