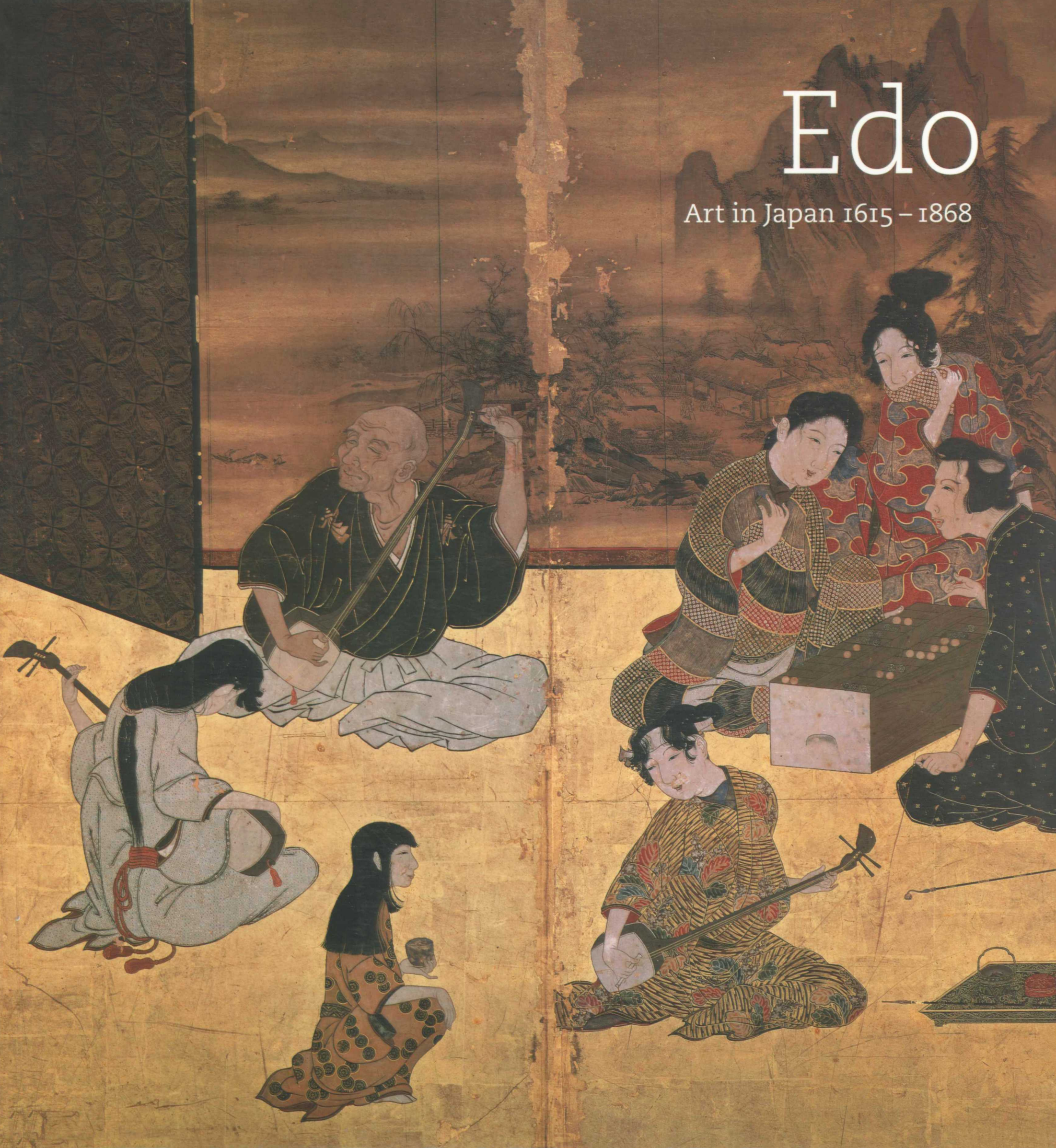


Edo

Art in Japan 1615 – 1868



Edo: Art in Japan 1615 – 1868

Robert T. Singer

WITH

John T. Carpenter

Hollis Goodall

Victor Harris

Matthew McKelway

Herman Ooms

Nicole Coolidge Rousmaniere

Henry D. Smith II

Sharon S. Takeda

Melinda Takeuchi

Edo

Art in Japan 1615 – 1868

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is made possible by
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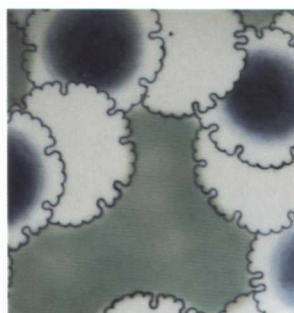
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LENDERS TO
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Agency for Cultural Affairs, Tokyo	Kunōzan Tōshōgū Shrine, Shizuoka	Saitama Prefectural Museum
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Kobe City Museum, Hyōgo		
Konchi'in, Kyoto		
Kuboso Memorial Museum of Arts, Izumi, Osaka		



“Edo” is not a name that prompts instant recognition in the West, yet it deserves to be better known. It refers both to the city of Edo—now called Tokyo—and to a time period, from 1615 through 1868, during which fifteen generations of Tokugawa shogun, or feudal overlords, ruled Japan from this urban capital. The political stability of the period enabled a vibrant popular culture to develop. New styles of artistic expression appeared throughout Japan, in elaborate screen paintings and scrolls, dramatic sculpture and armor, elegant ceramics and lacquers, lively textiles and color woodblock prints. Subject matter once reserved for the aristocracy or samurai was appropriated by the newly affluent merchant class, despite the rigid hierarchical organization of society. Neo-Confucian moralists as well as biting satiric humorists contributed to the artistic ferment and cultural discourse.

The challenge of assembling a comprehensive Edo exhibition is in doing justice to the richness and abundance of the period. The number of objects required, and the concomitant range of format and medium, is immense. Perhaps for this reason no large-scale exhibition covering the entire period has ever been attempted in this country, the only precedent elsewhere being a 1981 show at the Royal Academy, London. From the beginning the National Gallery of Art has had the strong support of the Agency for Cultural Affairs (Bunkacho), Tokyo, through which all registered art objects such as National Treasures and Important Cultural Properties must be lent. Nearly fifty such objects from seventy-five Japanese collections will be included in our exhibition. Among these are many that have never before left Japan, including the legendary *Hikone Screen*. The Japan Foundation was also an early and active collaborator in the project, and it is generously supporting the transportation costs for the exhibition. Since 1994 the Gallery has been fortunate to have had the enthusiastic participation of Robert T. Singer as guest curator. We are indebted to the trustees and administration of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, who agreed to share his expertise with us.

I would like to single out several of our Japanese colleagues for special recognition, beginning at the Bunkacho with Hideki Hayashida, commissioner, along with Shinji Kondo, Akitoshi Inoue, and Akira Machida. Akiyoshi Watanabe and Karoku Miwa started us on this journey, while Norio Suzuki, director of the fine arts division, lent his support and guidance on countless occasions, assisted by Toshifumi Hagiwara. To curatorial staff Koichi Fujimoto, Shiro Ito, Toshie Kihara, Shin'ichi Miyajima, Kensuke Nedachi, and Takamasa Saito as well as Teruhisa Funato, Tatsuo Kishi, and Hidenori Sugawara, we are grateful. At the Japan Foundation I thank Hiroaki Fujii, president, Kyoko Nakayama, and Sohei Yoshino, and in particular Takakuni Inoue and later Hayato Ogo, with Atsuko Sato and Shuji Takatori. Numerous individuals at both of these essential and venerable Tokyo institutions have labored long and hard on behalf of this exhibition.

The National Gallery of Art is especially grateful to NTT and its president, Jun-ichiro Miyazu, for their extraordinary generosity, without which the Edo exhibition would not be possible.

Finally, a great debt is owed to all of the lenders, both public and private, who have so generously agreed to share these rare and seldom-seen treasures with our museum visitors.

Earl A. Powell III

Director, National Gallery of Art

STATEMENT
FROM THE
AGENCY FOR
CULTURAL
AFFAIRS

The Agency for Cultural Affairs (Bunkacho) of the Government of Japan has presented overseas an exhibition of Japanese masterworks of art every year since 1951 to promote international cultural exchanges. This extensive program of exhibitions has been undertaken to introduce Japanese culture to the people of other countries and thus further understanding of Japanese history and culture.

Many of these exhibitions have been held in the United States. Among them, the large-scale *Japan: The Shaping of Daimyo Culture 1185–1868* attracted a great number of visitors when it was held at the National Gallery of Art in 1988–1989. A decade later we are honored and delighted to present *Edo: Art in Japan 1615–1868* at the National Gallery of Art in the nation’s capital.

The *Edo* exhibition comprises paintings, prints, sculpture, and decorative arts, organized within the framework of six themes. The first gallery of the exhibition introduces masterworks from all fields, while the sections of the catalogue—focusing on Ornament; Samurai; Work; Religion and Festivals; Travel, Landscape, and Nature; and Entertainment—comprehensively explore the energy and cultural refinement of the people of the Edo period.

Superb paintings from the Rinpa, Nanga, and Shasei schools, as well as *ukiyo*e paintings and prints, are displayed throughout the exhibition. The sculpture includes *nō* and *kyōgen* masks, portrait sculpture, and works made by Enkū and Mokujiki for use in popular Buddhism. Decorative arts include objects made for daimyo households and for *nō*, kabuki, and *kyōgen* theater, displaying the finest of Edo textile and lacquer techniques and designs, and brilliantly colored porcelains that reflect the taste of artistic patrons of the time.

This exhibition is unprecedented in its approach and structure: It introduces the essence of Edo culture, and its creativity at all levels of society, through a highly variegated range of art works. It will be extremely gratifying to us if this exhibition leads to a deeper appreciation of Japanese culture.

In closing, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all those whose efforts made this exhibition possible.

Hideki Hayashida
Commissioner, Agency for Cultural Affairs
Government of Japan

STATEMENT
FROM THE JAPAN
FOUNDATION

It is a source of great joy to be a coorganizer of *Edo: Art in Japan 1615 – 1868*, a comprehensive introduction to the art of the Edo period.

This is not the first collaboration between the Japan Foundation, the Agency for Cultural Affairs, and the National Gallery of Art. From October 1988 to January 1989 we presented *Japan: The Shaping of Daimyo Culture 1185 – 1868* in Washington. Almost exactly one decade later we are pleased to join our colleagues again in presenting the *Edo* exhibition, with many great works of art, including numerous National Treasures and Important Cultural Properties. As a survey of the riches of Edo-period art, this exhibition is structured around six themes: Edo Style (“Ornament” in the catalogue); Samurai; Work; Religion and Festivals; Travel, Landscape, and Nature; and Entertainment.

Since its establishment in 1972 the Japan Foundation has organized a wide variety of exhibitions in the United States, ranging from ancient to contemporary art. On the occasion of this exhibition, we hope that the magnificent objects on display will provide an opportunity for the people of the United States to become more familiar with Japanese culture and thereby deepen the friendship between our countries.

I would like to thank sincerely the museums and collectors who have so generously lent their treasures to this exhibition. In addition, I would like to express my appreciation to our coorganizers, the National Gallery of Art and the Agency for Cultural Affairs, and to all others in both countries who have contributed to the success of the exhibition.

Hiroaki Fujii
President, The Japan Foundation



Shogun of the Tokugawa clan ruled Japan from the city of Edo for fifteen successive generations, from the early seventeenth into the second half of the nineteenth century. While the ancient imperial capital of Kyoto continued to function as the fulcrum of traditional culture, by the early eighteenth century the balance of real political and economic power in Japan had shifted eastward to Edo, seat of the military government. The “Eastern Capital” vied with Kyoto as the locus of cultural production and served as trendsetter for the entire country. In this regard the concept of “Edo” transcends geography and chronology to connote a distinctive aesthetic sensibility—one characterized by bold, sometimes brash expression, experimentation with the new or exotic, and a playful outlook on life in general.

The Edo period is one of the richest in the history of Japanese art, but only in recent decades has it become a focus of art historical study in Japan. Previously, Edo art was considered too close to the present and less worthy of study than the “higher” art of earlier periods. Today, however, a majority of Japanese art history graduate students in both Japan and the West concentrate in Edo or post-Edo studies. This is partly because we are further away from the period and can view it more objectively; it is also because so much fascinating material has not been adequately studied.

The sheer length of the Edo period—two and a half centuries—makes an exhibition of this type a daunting challenge. It has not been attempted in Japan, where it is considered too vast a subject. But it is a worthwhile project for the West, where the image of Japan consists primarily of Edo art—woodblock prints and paintings of sumo wrestlers, kabuki actors, women of the pleasure quarters, and famous sites in the landscape; porcelain, both blue and white and brilliantly colored; and gold lacquer of extraordinary craftsmanship.

The goal is to present this complex array of material in a way that is coherent as well as thought-provoking. Traditionally, large exhibitions from Japan have been organized by medium, according to a hierarchy adopted from the West in the late nineteenth century: a room of paintings followed by a room of sculpture, then further rooms devoted to the various “crafts” of lacquer, ceramics, and textiles. But in pre-modern Japan many artists worked in several media; Ogata Kōrin was as likely to paint on a ceramic bowl or design a lacquer box as to paint on paper or silk. Little distinction was made between “pure art” and “functional art”: all art was functional in one sense or another. I worked for many months with the Agency for Cultural Affairs (Bunkacho) to formulate a new structure in which the works of art would be grouped thematically, not by medium. Each work was selected for its inherent aesthetic quality and for its ability to elucidate one or more themes. Art forms and schools that developed or matured during the Edo period (such as porcelain and woodblock prints) were favored over those that did not; middle and later Edo art was chosen over that created early in this period, when the influence of Momoyama art was still pervasive. Registered art objects were requested only when the individual piece fit this approach and was of the highest aesthetic quality.

I cannot express adequately my gratitude to the dedicated staff of the Bunkacho who agreed to sanction this departure from past practice. Both the exhibition and the catalogue reflect the willingness of the Bunkacho to join with us in this illuminating experiment.

In the catalogue Herman Ooms sets the stage for the exhibition, reformulating many of the conventional ideas about the social history of the period. The increasing economic clout of the merchant class led to the transformation of cultural forms that were once the preserve of court and warrior elites, and the arts became accessible to members of all social classes. The thematic contexts in which

works are presented—Ornament (Edo Style in the exhibition); Samurai; Work; Religion and Festivals; Travel, Landscape, and Nature; and Entertainment—are intended to illustrate the society that produced them.

In the first essay Nicole Coolidge Rousmaniere considers the role that ornament played in giving ceramics and lacquerware an aesthetic prestige in the Japanese tradition that would have been unthinkable in the West. Design motifs not only decorated objects but imbued them with political, literary, or symbolic meaning. Sharon S. Takeda, in this section and others, explicates the iconography and technical virtuosity of Edo-period textiles. Although this was a time of relative peace, the need for military accoutrements for ceremonial processions and display was as great as ever. As Victor Harris points out, armor, helmets, and swords continued to be effective signs of authority. Hollis Goodall shows the varied ways in which peasants and urban workers were portrayed in art of the Edo period, including minutely detailed, sometimes encyclopedic screen paintings of work that reflected the clearer definition of the place of the worker in society. My own essay discusses how various manifestations of spiritual life and celebrations inspired a wide range of art—powerful or sometimes playful ink paintings by Zen monk-painters, forceful yet innocent sculpture by itinerant priests, meticulously detailed screen paintings that document the annual festivals at important shrines. Japanese art is also frequently associated with images of nature—landscapes, flower-and-bird subjects, screens of autumn grasses—which gained an added dimension in the Edo period, as Melinda Takeuchi explains, owing to the unprecedented popularity of travel through the countryside to view famous scenic spots. Finally, John T. Carpenter presents an array of entertainment subjects, including masks and robes associated with *nō*, *kyōgen*, and kabuki theater, detailed scenes of the licensed pleasure districts, the *Hikone Screen* and other figural genre paintings, and the familiar *ukiyo*e prints of actors, sumo wrestlers, and courtesans.

The art of the Edo period speaks to viewers in the West in a direct and powerful way, not only for its inherent qualities but because so much of its aesthetic concurs with what we consider modern. Late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Japanese art, especially color woodblock prints, had a strong influence on artists such as Van Gogh and Toulouse Lautrec. More important, however, these works stand on their own as magnificent artifacts of a culture that treats the humble with dignity and in which even the most mundane object of a functional nature—a stationery box, a game board, or a serving dish—is transformed into an exquisite art object through its form or the application of ornament to its surface.

Robert T. Singer

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For his uncompromising support of this exhibition, I am eternally grateful to the director of the National Gallery of Art, Earl A. Powell III, who not only offered me an unparalleled opportunity but gave needed encouragement and advice during my four years of work on the exhibition. I am also grateful to Alan Shestack, deputy director, who made available several key members of his staff. Joseph J. Krakora, external affairs officer, has been my mentor every step of the way.

In the United States the exhibition has received the support of a stalwart band of scholars of Japanese art and history. Heartfelt thanks are owed to our catalogue authors, who balanced demanding professional schedules and the exigencies of writing for catalogue deadlines. They produced the illuminating collection of essays and narrative entries published here: John T. Carpenter, Hollis Goodall, Victor Harris, Matthew McKelway, Herman Ooms, Nicole Coolidge Rousmaniere, Henry D. Smith II, Sharon S. Takeda, and Melinda Takeuchi. Countless dedicated individuals, most of them at the Gallery, labored to prepare the exhibition and catalogue for our public. Too numerous to name here, they include, in alphabetical order, Gordon Anson, Susan M. Arensberg, Margaret Bauer, Tam Curry Bryfogle, Jennifer Bumba-Kongo, Diane Colaizzi, Patricia Draher, Linda Heinrich, Genevra Higginson, Carol Kelley, Mika Koyano, Mark A. Leithauser, Sandy Masur, Joseph N. Newland, Michael Pierce, Mervin Richard, Patricia O'Connell, Ann B. Robertson, Wendy Schleicher Smith, Frances P. Smyth, Nancy Starr, D. Dodge Thompson, Takahide Tsuchiya, Chris Vogel, Mary Yakush, and Deborah Ziska.

Robert T. Singer



NOTES TO
THE READER

Dimensions are given in centimeters, followed by equivalent inches in parentheses. Height precedes width; width precedes depth. For screens and hanging scrolls, image size is given whenever possible, not the overall size of the object.

For pairs of screens illustrated on the same page, the right screen appears above the left.

With the exception of the frontmatter, Japanese personal names appear in traditional order: surname first, followed by given name.

Illustrations of exhibited works of art are interspersed throughout the text, generally shared between the object entries and the essay that immediately precedes them; a selection is also included in the historical essay that begins on page 22. All works are identified in captions by catalogue number.

Texts of essays and entries are integrated, with individual objects discussed specifically in the entries and in broader contexts in the essays. For instance, a portrait of the priest-calligrapher Jiun Onkō and two of his works are discussed in the entries (cats. 127–129), while an extensive biographical account can be found in the accompanying essay (pages 214–217).

Most Japanese terms are italicized and defined the first time they appear in each section and are set in roman type thereafter. Words that have entered the English language (shogun, daimyo) are not italicized.

Some terms that appear frequently include:

chōnin (townspeople): artisans and merchants of the city

inrō, *netsuke*, and *ojime*: small container (*inrō*) once used to carry seals and seal paste, and later medicines, worn suspended by a cord and toggle (*netsuke*) from the sash used to secure a kimono; the ends of the cord pass through a bead (*ojime*) (see cats. 38–47)

kami: spirits or deities in the Shinto religion believed to be present in all aspects of nature

kosode (“small sleeves,” meaning narrow wrist opening): predecessor of the modern kimono; includes *furisode* (“swinging sleeves”), with long hanging sleeves and small wrist openings, and *katabira*, unlined summer *kosode*

makie: technique of decorating lacquerware by sprinkling metallic powder, usually gold, onto damp lacquer to create luxurious effects, including smooth (*hiramakie*) and high-relief (*takamakie*) surfaces

meishoe: paintings and prints of famous sites in Japan, including places of natural beauty, important cities, and architectural landmarks

Tōkaidō: ancient highway from Edo to Kyoto along the Pacific coast, with post towns offering goods and services for the convenience of travelers

ukiyoe (“pictures of the floating world”): paintings and prints of the entertainment districts, including portraits of kabuki actors and courtesans and views of the pleasure quarters; best known in the West through woodblock prints

Japanese historical periods and eras mentioned in this catalogue include:

Nara period 710–794

Enryaku era 782–806

Heian period 794–1185

Kamakura period 1185–1333

Nanbokuchō period 1336–1392

Muromachi period 1392–1573

Momoyama period 1573–1615

Keichō era 1596–1614

Edo period 1615–1868

Kan’ei era 1624–1644

Kanbun era 1661–1673

Enpō era 1673–1681

Genroku era 1688–1704

Hōei era 1704–1711

Tenpō era 1830–1843

Meiji period 1868–1912

The initials of contributing authors are given at the end of individual catalogue entries:

JTC John T. Carpenter

HG Hollis Goodall

VH Victor Harris

MM Matthew McKelway

NCR Nicole Coolidge Rousmaniere

RTS Robert T. Singer

HDS Henry D. Smith II

SST Sharon S. Takeda

MT Melinda Takeuchi

Edo: Art in Japan 1615 – 1868



片橋光和
方祝

Edo

is the name of the city that

Forms and Norms in Edo Arts and Society

HERMAN OOMS

evolved within the span of one century, from its castle town beginnings in the late 1500s, into the world's largest urban center, with a population well over one million.¹ "Edo" has also come to refer to a whole period, from the early 1600s until 1868 (when Edo became Tokyo). These two and a half centuries are often known by the family name of Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542 – 1616), the founder of Japan's last line of shogun, or feudal overlords. Together with some 260 daimyo, or regional military lords, the shogun ruled the country from Edo. Historians have also come to talk about Tokugawa Japan as "early modern" Japan. They suggest thereby that, since many social and cultural features of this remarkable period strike us today as somehow modern and oddly familiar rather than feudal, Japan's modernity was in part homegrown, not simply a transplant from the West.

HISTORICAL ART CLASSES In Tokugawa Japan, like anywhere else, art and society are related much as wealth and society are. Cultural products are found where there is wealth, for their existence depends as much on buyers as on artistic inspiration. Traditional societies typically did not have open art markets. Rather, the art field's very existence was conditioned and restricted by the demands, interests, and tastes of wealthy patrons. Since wealth in such societies is accumulated by those in power, arts and crafts (the two being hardly distinguishable) are to be found at the concentration points of political and religious power.

Opposite: detail from *Gods of Wind and Thunder* (cat. 140)

In Edo Japan wealth shifted away from castles and temples in unforeseeable ways, and so did artistic expression. This transformation is such that, over the course of the Tokugawa period, one is increasingly justified for the first time in Japanese history in speaking not of art and its patrons but of the people and their art. This “early modern” development can best be understood by keeping in mind the pre-Tokugawa relationship between art and wealth.

Before the seventeenth century power, and hence wealth and art sponsorship, came to be shared by four social groups, which emerged successively. First, there was the nobility centered on the emperor, in the capital of Nara in the 700s, then in Kyoto. The “state,” which was none other than the hundred-odd lineages of the nobility, was intimately related to the Buddhism that took final shape in the early 800s — esoteric in teachings and practice, monastic in form — with the official licensing of the Tendai and Shingon sects. Over time the upper ranks of this religious establishment were staffed with scions from the noble houses.

Thus large Buddhist temple-shrine complexes constituted a second locus for the accumulation of wealth. These centers, it should be noted, absorbed, incorporated, and in the process helped shape Shinto traditions.² Art in the so-called ancient period (before the twelfth century) was predominantly religious art expressed in a Buddhist idiom. The arts were further enriched in the medieval period (from the thirteenth century on) by the diffusion of Zen Buddhism and its construction of temple networks in Kamakura (the shogun’s city) and Kyoto (the emperor’s capital).

The third social group that emerged was military in nature — and, like the court nobility and the Buddhist power bloc, was supported by vast, tax-free estates.³ This was the samurai class, organized under a hereditary shogun, who from the end of the twelfth century was headquartered in the remote town of Kamakura in the east, then from the early fourteenth century to the late sixteenth century was in the Muromachi section of the capital. The Muromachi shogun’s proximity to the court accelerated the emulation of courtly traditions by the shogunal entourage, and this helped transform the samurai from “butchers,”⁴ as they were first called, into a third elite that, like the court and the clergy, invested in culture. This new ruling bloc established links with the new Zen Buddhism that was then being introduced from the continent. A flourishing official China trade, controlled by the shogun and managed by Zen monks, further expanded and enriched artistic production.

When private traders in the sixteenth century established commercial ties with Southeast Asia, a fourth kind of wealth was created by these merchants in cities like Kyoto and Sakai. Merchant riches also contributed to cultural developments, decisively influencing the aesthetics of the tea ceremony.⁵

The main social force in that war-torn century, however, was not the merchants but the warlords. During the last decades of the 1500s the greatest of them, the premier daimyo Oda Nobunaga (1534–1582), Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536–1598), and finally Tokugawa Ieyasu, succeeded in fielding armies greater than anything Japan, or Europe for that matter, had ever seen.⁶ Nobunaga had grandiose plans for eventually conquering China, a dream that Hideyoshi foolishly attempted to realize. These three conquerors grasped for symbolic formulas to give adequate expression to their unprecedented might.⁷

They were interested in art as a medium of political propaganda that would solicit respect and awe from everyone, but foremost from other daimyo, always rivals and potential challengers, for their supreme power and wealth. To produce this monumental public art — predominantly Chinese and often specifically Confucian in theme — these commanders mobilized scores of architects,

artisans, and artists (the Kano artists) to build their palatial castles (Azuchi, Jūrakudai, Nijōjō) and erect shrines for their cults (the Hōkoku-jinja in Kyoto, the Tōshōgū in Nikkō). They had the halls and rooms of these monuments decorated with symbols of their authority that spoke to the daimyo, the privileged retainers, and even the emperor, who were received in audience.⁸

THE ART OF
DRAWING
UP SOCIETY:
THE ARMY
AS MODEL

The Tokugawa society that emerged from the warfare of the sixteenth century was designed and structured in its main institutional components by military commanders who had acquired their organizational skills on battlefields by leading enormous armies. By securing peace in a stabilized and disciplined society over which they presided as unchallenged rulers after 1600, they aimed primarily if not exclusively at consolidating the gains made by force of arms and preserving the benefits of their conquests. The execution of this tacit purpose, hidden behind the ideological screen of a religious and moralizing discourse and demonstrative ritual, had a number of far-reaching consequences.

Military leadership, as Edo’s famous thinker Ogyū Sorai (1666 – 1724) remarked, consists of moving great masses of people and coordinating their movements. This, in his opinion, was not unlike the task faced by a ruler of a country at peace.⁹ Sorai’s controversial reformulation of Confucianism, coming close to modeling rulers ultimately after military hegemons, can be properly understood only if one takes into account that Sorai, like Yamaga Sokō (1622 – 1685) earlier, relied heavily on the writings of military strategists in whose schemes they found inspiration for devising administrative formulas. Sorai, Sokō, and others consciously adapted strategic military prescriptions in their discussions of the institutional prerequisites of a society at peace.¹⁰

To a military mind a minutely hierarchized structure is essential for society to function properly. Every subject, like every soldier in an army, should clearly know his place and assigned task in the larger enterprise of society. Thus everyone (strictly meaning the legal heads of households, not all single individuals) should have a public task and be in a sense, as Sorai put it, accountable as an “official.”¹¹ Quite understandably, some historians have proposed the label “garrison state” for Tokugawa Japan.¹² Everyone’s position in society was to be publicly defined with a clearly marked status.

This social order relied heavily on the eye for support. It was a matter not only of division, of cutting up society into separate status groups, but also of vision, of establishing clear signs that unmistakably displayed this order. The proper order should always be unambiguously connoted by unequivocal signs of everyone’s place in it. Every part was meant to evoke the whole, precisely because it was not just some contingent social unit or occupation but a constituent “part.” A peasant was not simply someone who earned a living by working in the fields; he occupied a position and a function in a hierarchical order.

To make this order visible, cultural items became endowed, by decree, with public political meaning that should override (and ideally eliminate) other signifieds, such as degrees of wealth, preferences in taste, or idiosyncrasies of their owners. This was obviously a case of ambitious overreach on the part of the authorities. Nevertheless, the material expression of this order was often spelled out in annoying detail.¹³

Today people are said to seek status, distinction, specific social esteem, through judiciously chosen signs of personal economic well-being. The situation in Tokugawa Japan was quite different. Then, everyone *had* a status that one wore as a social tattoo according to the place one’s house and

lineage had been assigned by the authorities once and for all. Thus one was a samurai (of a certain rank), or a peasant (with or without certain privileges), a merchant (organized in an official guild or not), an artisan, a beggar, an outcast, and so on.

The status system, ostensibly devised to perpetuate a lopsided distribution of political power, functioned as well to regulate a corresponding allocation of material goods. Sumptuary laws prescribed the ideal status-appropriate consumption of goods. For those lower on the status ladder this often meant limitations on the kind of things they could acquire or display (“no silk for commoners”) — an expense ceiling. For each daimyo and for many samurai, however, this often translated into an expense floor. They were forced into prescribed levels and modes of conspicuous consumption according to their status, which was correlated directly to income or, more precisely, to the equivalent portion of the national tribute base, a daimyo-controlled feudal income from which samurai were allotted stipends.¹⁴

Underpinning this system was a conception of a nonexpandable economy of limited resources and goods whose distribution should be in line with the distribution of political power.¹⁵ Consumption, especially public and visible consumption, should not express personal wealth but should demonstrate one’s subordinate or superior place in the polity and one’s acceptance of it. Thus the Tokugawa authorities meant to keep material enjoyment adjusted to the maintenance of political power by using status hierarchies to calibrate the consumption of goods, the accumulation of which they thought they had securely governed. Fashion was to be regulated by decree, because it had to express degree. Thus “fashion” in the modern sense of the word was not permitted.

This system called on craftsmen, artisans, and artists to design status creatively, as fashion. Every one of the 260 or so daimyo maintained in his domain a residence, and very often a castle, and in Edo three or more mansions for himself and his family and dependents. The largest of these daimyo was the Maeda house, which controlled Kaga domain with the equivalent of 4 percent of the country’s wealth (compared to the shogun’s 25 percent, and the emperor’s .03 percent). The size, style, type, and degree of ornamentation these castles and mansions could display were regulated by shogunal decree.

Edo was Japan in some essential ways. All daimyo were subject to the system of alternate attendance at the shogunal court: they had to reside in Edo in alternate years, and their main wives and heirs stayed there permanently as hostages. Thus literally all powerful houses of the realm maintained a strong presence in Edo — because the shogun wanted to keep an eye on them, and they as well wanted to be at the center. The need for social space in the city to be organized in the right symbolic way was such that daimyo and their retainers were frequently reassigned residences within Edo. The number of such reassignments peaked around the turn of the eighteenth century; between 1690 and 1730, for each five-year period, it fluctuated between 1,000 and 2,800. These moves were the result of promotions, demotions, and the creation of new wards, a total of 191 for the same forty-year period. This, together with the all too numerous fires, assured that carpenters, plasterers, tatami mat makers, and craftsmen of all kinds were kept continuously busy (fig. 1).¹⁶



fig. 1
During Edo’s largest fire in 1657 people pushing huge wheeled trunks that contained their belongings clogged the streets and caused many casualties; such trunks were outlawed in 1683. Illustration by Asai Ryōi (1661) from Sakamaki Kōta and Kuroki Takashi, eds., “*Musashi abumi*” *kōchū to kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1988)

A PICTURE OF
AND FOR SOCIETY

The processions of daimyo to and from Edo with their hundreds of retainers and followers — at one time up to four thousand in Maeda’s case — were not only miniature mobilization and marching exercises for all the daimyo’s armies; they also had a specular effect (fig. 2). The colorful marching regiments presented to society gigantic moving and movable tableaux vivants of its ordered self. These

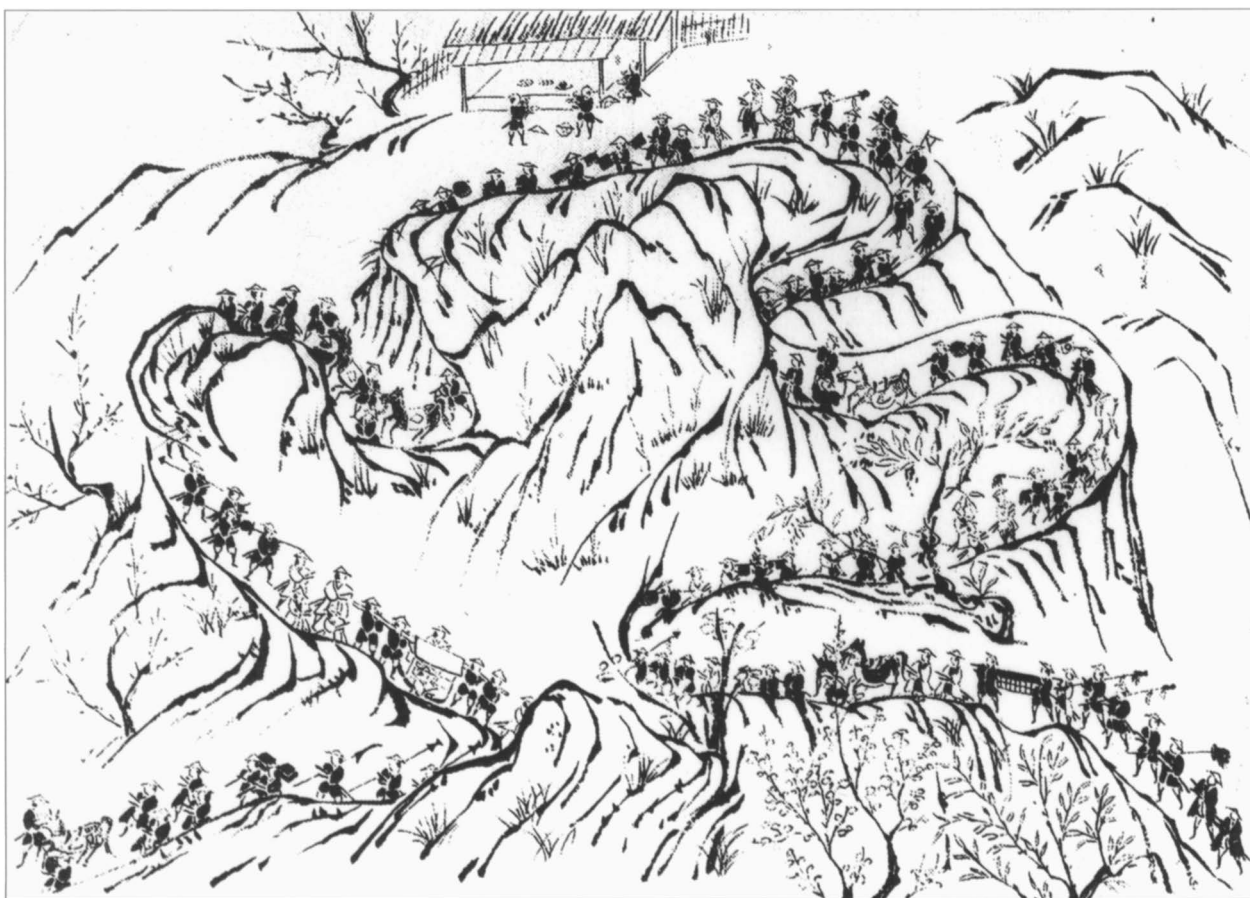
mirrors of an ideal social order were mounted dozens of times each year along Japan's highways and byways.¹⁷ Over time the paraphernalia marshaled for these occasions, yearly for the daimyo and almost continuously for anyone living near the highways and in the regions around Edo, came to emphasize the display element over the military or practical side. For instance, helmets that daimyo might have worn on such public occasions were often elaborately and ingeniously decorated parade helmets, militarily useless, save for the psychological effect of commanding awe from the spectators (see cat. 75).

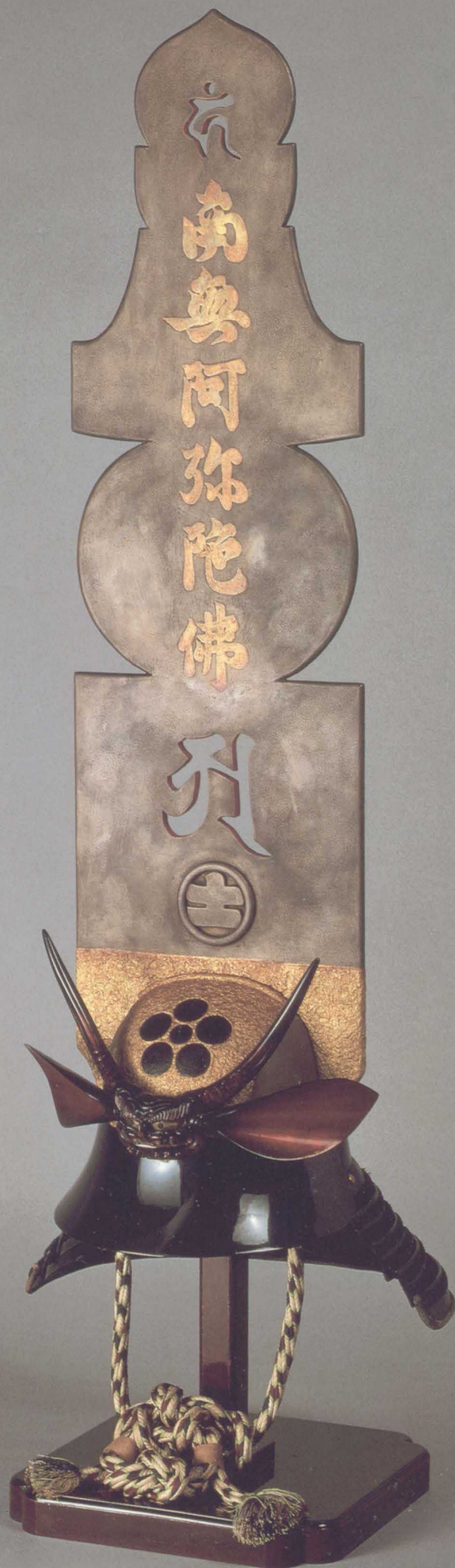
At the other end of the social spectrum the peasant elite, on their own initiative, did their best to supplement rudimentary shogunal or daimyo legislation in their villages concerning matters sumptuary ("peasants should only wear cotton"). They regulated intravillage status consumption to set themselves apart, creating certain exclusive material privileges by specifying, for example, that only titled peasants could use umbrellas, have new-styled houses, gates at their compounds, covered ceilings in their homes, or pillars of a certain height.¹⁸

Correct relationships among the various offices, ranks, and status holders had to be expressed through proper etiquette and social decorum by following codes that modulated matters of dress and address. A rank-sensitive honorific language to be used on official occasions, established in earlier centuries, was further refined.

Particularly noteworthy is the role that a regular and regulated exchange of appropriate gifts played in reinforcing social and political interdependencies. Gift giving was an important maintenance mechanism for social ties, virtually always hierarchical and unequal, that was found at every level of

fig. 2
A procession of Maeda,
daimyo of Kaga,
crossing a mountain pass.
Illustration from
Chūda Toshio, *Sankin kōtai*
dōchūki: Kaga-han
shiryō o yomu (Tokyo, 1993)





cat. 75
Helmet with symbolic tower,
eighteenth century,
iron, wood, and lacquer,
height of helmet bowl 16.9 (6⁵/₈),
Kyoto National Museum

society. One small district intendant who shared the supervision of a mere twenty-five villages with two colleagues (some intendants were in charge of more than a hundred villages) kept a detailed record of the flow of presents in his office. In a single year, 1851, he gave 188 gifts and received an astonishing 596, a few of them from village headmen.¹⁹ A good part of the economy was literally a gift economy, and not only in the sense that an elaborate, priceless exchange of goods took place. Functional articles like writing boxes (cats. 6, 7, 27, 28, 36, 37) were also produced artfully and priced expensively so that they could serve as tokens of a disinterested self, loyal and respectful — tokens that a discriminating eye could undoubtedly gauge for the purity of their symbolic alloy.

The ritual prescriptions attached to status that aimed at a politically correct distribution of material goods were premised on two assumptions in the eyes of the rulers. Wealth, it was thought, could be accumulated only through coercive means: military force (prevalent in the sixteenth century) or taxation, that is, levying tribute (the Tokugawa method). Second, the economy was assumed to be a zero-sum game. Wealth was the result of “robbing the people,” as Andō Shōeki (1703–1762) put it bluntly in the eighteenth century.²⁰ Goods that someone had in excess must have been taken from others who had been forced to give them up: wealth could only be redistributed, not created.

NOUVEAUX RICHES, ARTS NOUVEAUX

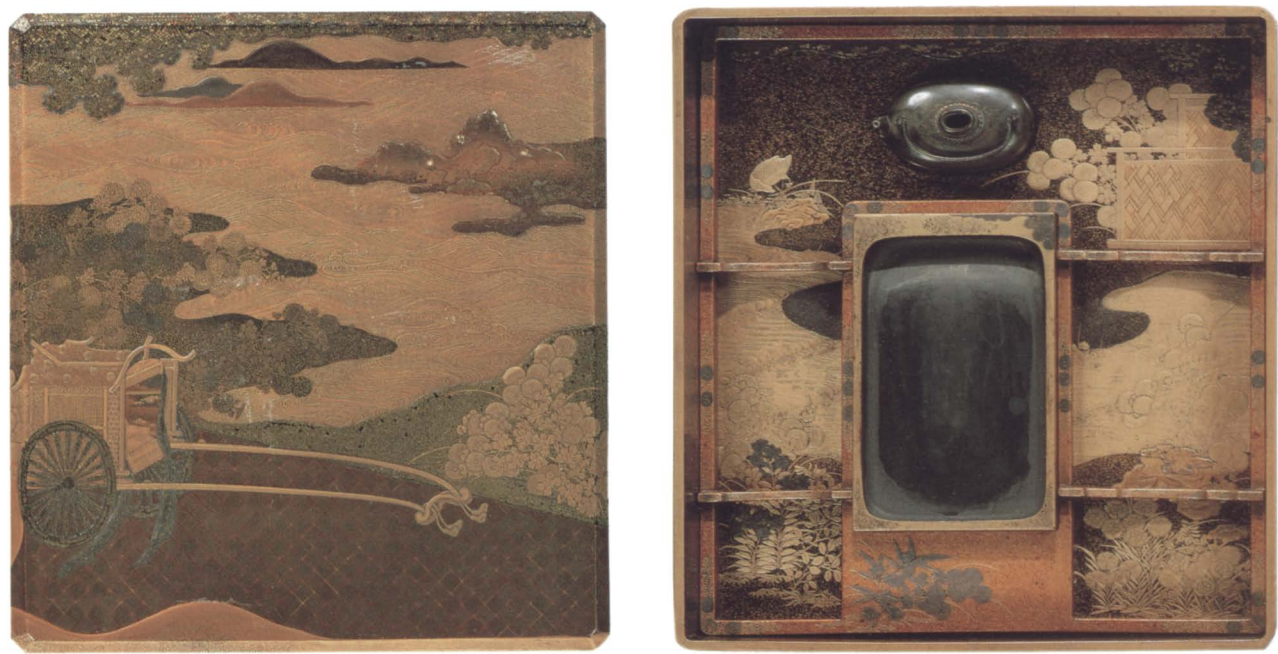
As it turned out, wealth was created through a new mechanism, namely the market. Although periodic markets where people went to buy daily necessities had always existed, the development of a national market affecting just about everyone was something new, a distinctive Tokugawa phenomenon. Throughout the eighteenth century and well into the nineteenth, the economy kept expanding at a slow but steady pace, while population growth came to a virtual standstill.²¹ The result was a surplus that did not flow where the rulers had expected all surplus to flow.

The samurai class, locked into the cities and towns by official decree, had to deal with the costs of city life and creeping inflation.²² Meanwhile, a significant number of merchants grew richer as they gradually reaped the benefits of market expansion. Thus new wealth was generated that, by the turn of the eighteenth century, had started to celebrate itself in novel cultural forms.

The upper fractions of the warrior class were still very much patterning themselves on the courtly traditions, and China remained a source of cultural attraction for them. The townsmen, however — blocked from possible political or administrative careers by the samurai — while not averse to emulating the nobility or things Chinese, nevertheless created a vibrant new culture, the likes of which were not to be found anywhere else in East Asia. In China, for instance, rich merchants sought cultivation as Confucian gentlemen and did not produce a culture distinctively fashioned by their class tastes, preferences, and values.

Although the authorities certainly were far from encouraging this development, the Tokugawa social and institutional setup must have been such that it did not, or could not, prevent this historical change from occurring. It is noteworthy that the Tokugawa rulers consecrated the establishment of pleasure quarters in big cities;²³ noteworthy because such public endorsement of sexual indulgence would be utterly unthinkable in a society that took Confucian teachings seriously. In Japan, however, a variegated, proliferating culture of play sprang up on the periphery of these pleasure sites.

Tokugawa society was an urbanized society to a large extent. Urban customs and fads spread throughout the land, traveling with daimyo and samurai as they returned from their attendance duties



cat. 6
Writing box with imperial
cart design,
seventeenth century,
lacquer on wood with makie,
3.9 x 22.4 x 20.9
(1½ x 8⅞ x 8¼),
Tokyo National Museum,
Important Cultural Property

in Edo. In addition, rural men and women sought temporary employment in towns and cities during the slack agricultural season or after falling on hard times. This led to an environment where status distinctions were not observed as the authorities had wished, even though social honor and prestige had become widely esteemed, especially in Edo, with its warrior population of over a half million.

Much of this samurai status culture found its way to commoners, in part through commercially available etiquette booklets. More directly, Edo commoners, by interacting with and observing the samurai at close quarters, soon adopted honorific formal speech, a cultural transmission in which commoner daughters employed in samurai households played a significant role.²⁴ In a spirit of simultaneously emulating and contesting, there also developed a novel ethos of commoner pride and brashness (“there are two things one need not be afraid of: lice and samurai”). This *Edokko* type of quick-tempered commoner, self-consciously different from Kyotoites or Osaka merchants, was prototypically embodied by the superhero Gongorō, who, every year in the eleventh month, thundered “Shibaraku!” on the kabuki stage. *Shibaraku* (the name of the play) means “Just a minute, you,” and by shouting it, Gongorō in the nick of time stopped the villain’s execution of several “righteous” people.²⁵ As Kaiho Seiryō (1755 – 1817) observed in 1813:

The people of Edo... are stout, supercilious, and contrary. This militant aura goes back to the time when Tokugawa Ieyasu settled here [and built Edo].... Because the warrior temper has defined Edo, this warrior spirit has shifted over to the people who all have become stout-hearted... [and] to other regions, so that now the people of all the castle towns have adopted this Edo street-knight mentality.... In fighting higher authority, they are always determined to hold out until they win.²⁶

This emergence of a distinct urban culture, with its own deferential language, proud posturing, and innumerable pastimes,²⁷ was made possible by the fortunes of merchants and money exchangers. In the early eighteenth century it was clear to a social observer like Sorai that the cash nexus and contractual relationships had started to damage seriously the feudal relations of

personal dependency and loyalty that ought to have cemented the ties between superiors and inferiors.²⁸ Sorai lamented the appearance of what we would call today (early) modern social traits, although he could not understand — as no one did at the time — that the transformation he had witnessed during his lifetime, which he called a crisis, was irreversible.²⁹ Merchants had become indispensable to the survival of society, and the new urban mentality would not disappear but continue to flourish.

Three generations later, in the early nineteenth century, Kaiho Seiryō understood better the dynamics of Tokugawa society, where, in his opinion, everything had a price, everything had become a commodity, and commodities were everywhere.³⁰ This, he concluded, was an expanding economy in which consumption drove production:

The soil, by its very nature, produces things of the soil. There is no principle that would say that these products will decrease when you take them. [On the contrary], *the more one takes, the more comes forth*. It is like hairs falling out when one does up one's hair. Left undone, no hairs will fall out, but they will wither and grow thin. [On the other hand] if combed frequently, lots of hairs will fall out, but the hair will grow luxuriant. It is in the nature of the head to have hair sprout on it. This is not different from the soil producing things.... *They abound in volume where the taking is greatest*.³¹

The basic principle at work in society, Seiryō concluded, was an expanding commodity circulation, which he accorded the status of a “natural” principle: “That commodities (*shiromono*) bring forth more commodities is the principle.”³²

The variety of artifacts, the sophistication of design, and the extraordinary quality of skill and production constitute the most outstanding features of this commodity circulation in the realm of art. For instance, two hundred works by the famous painter Ogata Kōrin (1658–1716) were reproduced in woodblock format in two volumes, published a century after his death. These books and others, such as a volume of 150 designs for combs and metal pipe stems by Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849) (fig. 3), served, as the scholar Nishiyama Matsunosuke points out, as “catalogs that showed the public what was available.... From these volumes, the public selected designs to be executed by highly skilled artisans, most of whom are not known to us by name today.” People could “order such illustrations transferred onto combs and pipes, fans, screens, and sliding doors.”³³

Such finely decorated artifacts were meant to be seen, and they were displayed increasingly as status symbols, in the modern sense rather than in the Tokugawa legal sense. They were meant to elicit admiration, and some of them do indeed look like conversation pieces (cats. 15, 88, 139). In pre-Tokugawa times, only the nobility, the religious and military elites, and a limited number of merchants had mansions with reception rooms, *tokonoma* alcoves, and staggered shelves where artifacts could be placed in full view. In the seventeenth century, however, interior space for this kind of display became increasingly available in commoner houses, made possible on a wider scale by considerable improvements in housing styles among commoners and samurai.

Commoner houses were made sturdier with supporting posts on foundation stones rather than on the ground (where they would easily rot). They had plastered walls and were more symmetrical and larger than earlier dwellings.³⁴ Increasingly, they had wooden rather than dirt floors, and tatami mats became more usual, at least in the main rooms. Interior storage cupboards (*oshiire*) to store bedding and quilts came gradually into general use only during the Tokugawa period and became a standard fixture



fig. 3
Some of the
“150 Decorative Patterns for
Combs and Pipe Stems”
by Katsushika Hokusai (1823).
Illustration from
Jack Hillier, *The Art of Hokusai*
in *Book Illustration*
(London, 1980)



cat. 139
Festival Scenes showing a
procession winding through
daimyo residences in Edo,
detail from a pair of six-panel
screens; color and gold on paper,
each 160 x 350 (63 x 137³/₄),
Private Collection, Kyoto

of house plans.³⁵ Though the traditional Japanese home as we imagine it today — devoid of heavy, large furniture, with its stored futon, paper-covered sliding panels, and tokonoma alcove — became typical, in the minimal sense of the word, only later in the period, commoner houses then held far more articles than in the past. Koizumi Kazuko writes that “the custom of making bridal furnishings even passed down to ordinary commoners. . . . Typical items included chests, trunks, hampers, mirrors and mirror stands, clothes racks, cosmetic cases, and sewing boxes.”³⁶

In order to store these multiplying articles, chests (*tansu*) in all varieties and shapes became popular in the eighteenth century: clothes chests, tea chests, apothecary chests, writing boxes, and so on.³⁷ The wealthier commoners, however, needed more than an assortment of chests and ornamental shelves. Improved fireproof storehouses started to be built in greater numbers to hold goods that were brought out only on certain occasions (allowing Edo plasterers in about 1730 to command fees three times higher than the high fees of carpenters).³⁸

FORM REFINED

The combination of a markedly stratified society and an extreme division of labor (which had already reached a high degree in the late middle ages) made for an ever greater specialization of skills. Some skills were kept as secret house traditions; others were described in great detail in popular books. This formalization of practices took place even in fields where we might least expect it, like that of cuisine.

In a delightful discussion of Edo-period cuisine, Nishiyama Matsunosuke describes how techniques for cutting and preparing food, like so many other practices, were eventually ennobled by being called an art or “Way” (*michi*, *-dō*), which changed over time into “secret traditions.”³⁹ The concept comes close to our expanded use of the term “art,” as in the “art of French cooking.” Thus a few formal cuisine traditions developed from rules and techniques used during the fifteenth century in ceremonies and banquets, some of them at the shogunal court. Of these, the Shijō school of cuisine became the most famous during the Tokugawa period. Its “secrets,” often starting with legendary tales of noble or mythical origins, were more about preparation and presentation, the cutting and displaying of food — again, a matter of vision and division, like the status system — than about recipes in the modern sense. Form was of paramount importance. These techniques were written down and beautifully illustrated with colored drawings in three volumes (1642, 1649, and 1774), to be used by members of the school. One finds there, for instance, fifty-five ways to cut and display carp and ten each for sea bass, trout, wild goose, crane, and pheasant. Nishiyama writes that the third volume “was a response to the plebeian counteroffensive in cookbook publishing.”⁴⁰

The formulas, however, were not kept secret after all. Shortly after 1642 a *Digest of Secret [Shijō] Transmissions on Correct Food Preparation and Cutting* appeared in print, revealing among other things, thirty-six styles of preparing and serving carp.⁴¹ From the second or third decade of the eighteenth century cookbooks with marketing-sensitive titles (from *Secret Chest of a Myriad Cooking Treasures* to *Digest of Chinese-Style Meager Fare*) and regular recipes (for soups) started to sell well. The genre went back as far as the mid-seventeenth century (*Tales of Cooking*, 1643; and a six-volume *Collection of Edo Cuisine*, 1674), which was also about the time the first restaurants opened in Edo.⁴² Cuisine, in restaurants and bookshops, had become a commodity.

What happened in the field of cuisine repeated itself in many Tokugawa-period traditions of practical knowledge. Similar excesses in refinement developed, such as differentiations related to time,

circumstance, status, and class. Often only partly successful attempts were made to keep the traditions secret by controlling their transmission in various ways.⁴³ This development was sufficiently widespread to qualify it as a cultural pattern. Equally interesting is the way form and content are related in these cultural practices.

Manner often overwhelmed matter; content lost substance and disappeared, as it were, leaving room only for form. Form had to be a perfect embodiment of norm — indeed, a host of norms pertaining to detailed prescriptions and expectations regarding proper time, specific place, appropriate status, and, underneath it all, wealth— and increasingly so for higher social and status groups. Thus, for the elite consumers of Shijō cuisine, the generic “carp” ceased to exist, as they were presented only with poetically transformed “flower-viewing carp,” “congratulatory carp,” “dragon gate carp,” “snowy morning carp,” and “carp in a boat,” each appropriate for one particular occasion (fig. 4).⁴⁴ Ideally, one never just ate plain carp. One above all degustated culture, and ingested the status politics — in a sense, the whole system — which one thereby became. Just as social space was infinitely differentiated according to status, social time became segmented in incommensurable moments. This was achieved through an extraordinary emphasis on form. Proper form was all that counted.

Norm, form, and formality are close neighbors, and together they may sometimes seem to take up too much cultural space. One can argue that this was the case in Tokugawa Japan. Tokugawa moralists understood the intimate connection between form and norm. For them, form was destiny. “Heaven and nature have their form . . . that is to say, all things have their own destiny,” Yamaga Sokō wrote. Ogyū Sorai denied any regulatory power to inborn moral dictates or cosmic, natural principles: “The mind-heart has no form. Therefore it cannot be regulated. . . . Principle has no form. Therefore it cannot provide a standard [to follow].”⁴⁵ For him, socially correct forms were all important for an orderly society. Yet he also criticized the excessive adherence to form.

The performance of alternate attendance in Edo became an empty shell, but a costly one since it drained large amounts from the daimyo’s revenue. Retinues were reduced; servants and hired hands came to constitute the bulk of the processions. In 1827, out of a total of 1,969 people in Maeda’s scaled-down procession, only 185, or nine percent, were actual retainers; the rest were servants employed by the retainers or by the domain, or were porters from the way stations.⁴⁶ The historian Watanabe Hiroshi, reflecting on the relatively quick manner in which the Tokugawa system gave way, suggests that the end must have come as a sudden awakening from a dream, as if the royal coach at the stroke of midnight collapsed into a pumpkin. He writes that during the Meiji period (1868–1912), a former shogunal elite retainer described the “face-to-face audiences” with the shogun, a hallmark of the superior status of the bannerman retainers to which he belonged. After being rushed into an audience room, he recalled, one bowed with one’s forehead on the tatami as a voice said “hushhh” until a second “hushhh” signaled that the audience was over, without the retainers ever knowing whether the shogun had indeed passed through the room or not.⁴⁷

This was a description of the late Tokugawa preoccupation with form, but even in the early eighteenth century Sorai had already complained about a similar formalist state of affairs. Samurai “had the most comfortable upbringing imaginable,” he wrote, and they had “come, gradually, to have the most delicate dispositions: they worry about trivialities and excessively upbraid their subordinates for their mistakes. Those who force their subordinates to be perfect are described today as good officials. This is why they worry about making mistakes. . . . People do not become very involved with

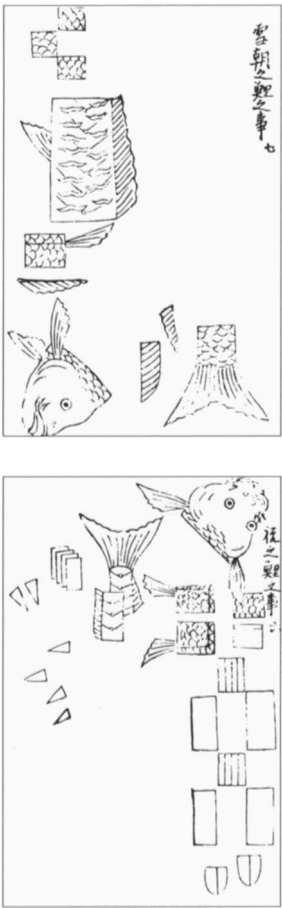


fig. 4
“Congratulatory carp” and
“snowy morning carp,” in
*Digest of Secret Transmissions on
Correct Food Preparation and
Cutting* (1642–1659).
Illustration from Yoshii Motoko,
ed., *Edo jidai ryōri-hon shūsei*
(Kyoto, 1978)

their work and worry chiefly about hiding things from their superiors.”⁴⁸ “The way of the world nowadays,” he further observed, “is to go about doing things, making haste. . . . [Everyone] temporizes, which means that, in order to avoid incurring the displeasure of their self-indulgent superiors, it is thought that the right thing to do for underlings is to run about, scurrying around with a stern mien, which is why everything and everyone hustles about in such a hurry.”⁴⁹

FORM AS NORM

The emphasis on form that so often produced the empty formalism decried by Sorai may to some degree be related to the outmoded military model according to which Tokugawa society was structured. Correct form is preeminently a theatrical quality of precise mimesis, and one encounters it in the theater, the army, or bureaucracy. The Muromachi-period founder of *nō* theater, Zeami (1363–1443), theorized, however, that perfect outward form does not constitute the flower of artistic performance unless it is animated by a special quality that the actor has to bring out from within.⁵⁰ It was the absence of such an inner state of being that Sorai regretted. Since ritual and rites are one form of theater, Confucian etiquette also emphasizes that observance of form ought to be preceded and accompanied by the properly cultivated mind. Thus, by extension, the mind also expresses itself through the prescribed forms of cultural practices such as calligraphy, the tea ceremony, or flower arrangement, which were all in vogue among commoners in late Tokugawa Japan.

A number of thinkers in eighteenth-century Japan minimized the inner component, ultimately to the point of disappearance. In Sorai’s opinion, the inner quality that should accompany ritual behavior (in the widest possible sense as standardized forms of social interaction) could not be developed independently from ritual form itself. The right pattern of social interaction, which was fixed by ritual, produced the right kind of mind-set. The best learning, he argued, was the kind that dispensed with words and occurred through the whole body, from things and situations, thus producing the proper habits and dispositions.⁵¹ Put more generally, matter properly patterned would produce a properly patterned mind, and consequently a properly mannered human being.

The spiritual concerns of Sorai’s student Dazai Shundai (1680–1747) were even further limited, for they stopped at the behavioral level. All one had to do was to act in the prescribed way, no matter what one’s inner state of mind;⁵² external conformity was the only thing that counted for him. External forms, which choreographed social interaction, were the most important if not the only thing human beings had in common. These forms were expected to channel human emotions and sentiments into cultured patterns that constituted the basis for human communication. To be uncivilized (or not human) was to lack such forms. Many influential Tokugawa thinkers argued that humans had not much in common otherwise. Contrary to what Song Confucians emphasized endlessly in their discourse on human nature, these thinkers denied the existence of a common nature that all humans would share.

For example, Confucians who relied on Mencius argued that the mind of all humans is alike: “All palates enjoy the same tastes, all ears the same sounds, all eyes the same beauty. Should only minds not share the same things?”⁵³ Mencius argued for sameness based on an everyday, “obvious” consensus regarding sensory experiences. Sorai opposed this in order to privilege difference. “People differ in their natures; their minds are [as different] as their faces.”⁵⁴ Why assume that unseen reality differs from what strikes the senses?

Motoori Norinaga (1730 – 1801) retheorized Shinto in the same vein. His view of the *kami*, or gods, was that they really existed, a statement that very few strict Confucians or even Sorai would be able to support. Even all of history, the good with the bad, he believed, should be seen as the activity of the gods. Intrigued by what these *kami* ultimately were, Norinaga devoted three decades to the study of Japan’s myths and Ancient Way, coming up with a rather inclusive list of awe-inspiring things. *Kami* included mountains, the sea, human beings, and such, and Norinaga remarked at the end of that list: “Again, the sea or mountains are also often called *kami*. This *does not refer to the spirit of the mountain or the sea; it points directly to the sea or the mountain in question.*”⁵⁵

Thus, in the realm of religion as explained by Norinaga, religious objects were not signifiers pointing to a referent, a spirit beyond.⁵⁶ There was no other dimension; what was material was also the spiritual. Reality, material and spiritual undifferentiated, did not extend beyond what the eye saw.

FORM
CONFOUNDED

An extensive interest in form is further evident in the development of a whole popular culture that elicited loud laughter as a response to the innumerable ways in which form was confounded through play, visual and word play, punning, and even burlesque. The authorities made fitful attempts to suppress this laughter but were generally unsuccessful.

One should distinguish between various degrees of playful deconstructions of form and seriousness and should start from a generic fascination with form, a sort of taxonomy craze. Hiraga Gennai (1729 – 1779), for instance, held exhibits of minerals and rocks assembled from all over the country (fig. 5). Others collected shells. Another example is the detailed, realistic paintings of varieties of insects,



fig. 5
Exposition of Oddities
by Kitao Shigemasa is a spoof on the craze for collecting specimens, which here include a two-headed snake, mermaids, a spendthrift son whose father has imprisoned him in a bottle as an object lesson, and little people. Illustration from Santō Kyōden, *Ko wa mezurashii misemono-gatari* (1801), Tokyo Metropolitan Central Library, Maeda Collection

cat. 118
 Attributed to Katsushika
 Hokusai, *Buddhist Priest Warding
 off a Demon*, c. 1845,
 hanging scroll; ink and color
 on paper,
 150 x 240 (59 x 94 1/2),
 Sōjiji, Tokyo



flowers, and plants. As Timon Screech has amply documented, this increased fascination with forms may have had something to do with the expansion of the eye through a variety of optical instruments, telescopes, microscopes, and loupes.⁵⁷

This protoscientific interest coexisted very comfortably with a titillating curiosity for weird forms displayed in the popular shows that came and went with bewildering variety and speed in Edo.⁵⁸ The numerous street performers of many unusual skills fed this same appetite for the sensational.⁵⁹ In the realm of religion the present catalogue includes some striking representations of what must have seemed odd. A depiction generally described as of Kōbō Daishi (Shingon's founder) taming a demon (cat. 118), for example, seems slanted toward the fantastic if not exotic. In another painting a demon and *dōji* constitute a strange, rather incongruous pair (cat. 117). Furthermore, a teasing, perhaps even sacrilegious, visual pun in two pictures plays on the traditional depiction of the Buddha on his deathbed surrounded by his disciples. In one painting Ariwara no Narihira, the famous poet from antiquity, is bidding farewell to all his lovers; in another the Buddha has been replaced by a big radish resting in the middle of a circle of vegetables (cats. 120, 121).

In the folk art of street performances imitation, usually comic mimicry, was a major mode. In Edo the *gōmune*, an incorporated group of street corner mimes that allegedly harked back to masterless samurai origins in the seventeenth century, specialized in twelve different styles. They mimicked puppet balladeers, readers of warrior tales, pairs of comic mimes (*manzai*) usually seen only at the New Year, religious solicitors, and sermonizers (*tataki*) (cat. 88).⁶⁰ Nishiyama has catalogued the various types of popular performing arts that flourished in the last half-century of the Tokugawa period: tricks and acrobatics (twelve kinds), special abilities (seven kinds, including genres in which a performer takes on eight, fifteen, eighteen, or more roles), five kinds of mimicry (impersonations, birdcalls,



fig. 8
Five beggars studying
Confucian texts by Santō Kyōden,
(1789). Illustration from *Kibyōshi*,
sharebon-shū (Tokyo, 1958)



cat. 88
Occupations and Activities
of Each Month,
mid-eighteenth century,
detail from a pair of
six-panel screens;
ink, color, and gold on paper,
each 79.4 x 235.8 (31 1/4 x 92 7/8),
The Sakai Museum, Osaka

grimacing in the manner of famous people, gesturing, mime plays), six kinds of dance, twelve narrative arts, and ten kinds of theatricals and balladeers.⁶¹

Puns, spoofs, and satire were important components of the humorous performances that took place, first on the street corners, then in small variety halls (*yose*) or within flimsy, shaded enclosures erected for the occasion in the last decades of the eighteenth century. The popularity of the *yose* grew fast. According to one study, the number of such halls in the city of Edo jumped from seventy-five in 1815 to more than seven hundred by 1845, even though the Tenpō Reforms of 1842 had reduced the number of licenses for such spots to a mere fifteen.⁶²

Burlesque, the derisive imitation and grotesque confounding of form, was the ultimate satirical genre that could make fun of any social convention. Burlesque also had a specular effect, but the total opposite from the daimyo marches. Through absurd exaggeration, juxtaposition, or contrast, burlesque mirrored social practices in a distorting way.

Nothing seemed sacred. Political satire was given free reign in the “yellow covers” genre of small booklets (*kibyōshi*), and the authorities responded by punishing only some of the satirists here and there, almost pro forma. One of those who was manacled and thrown into jail for a short while was Santō Kyōden (1761–1816), a professional satirist whose targets included preachy Confucianism and any illusions that Confucians might have had about relevance of their teachings for society. One short work by Kyōden (both text and illustrations) presents a mock discussion of Confucian passages, again and again misunderstood by five beggars. Their tense, probing faces betraying deep thought, they try to make sense of hallowed passages, but from their down-to-earth perspective (fig. 8).

Matter or the physical here leaves no room for the moral; the serious and the lofty are pulverized by the vulgar and scatological.⁶³ In Kyōden’s spoof the famous, cryptic last line of the Chinese classic



cat. 34
 Melon-shaped dish with
 melon design, 1691/1749,
 Utsutsugawa stoneware,
 14.9 (5⁷/₈) long,
 The Kyushu Ceramic
 Museum, Saga

Spring and Autumn Annals, about the appearance of a unicorn signaling the coming of a sage (a puzzle for generations and generations of commentators), renders its meaning through a play of words: one beggar wonders, in mock surprise, whether this mysterious unicorn (*kirin*) means that Confucius had the clap (*rinbyō*). At a recent conference where Kyōden's piece was discussed, scholars of Confucianism from China, Korea, and Vietnam insisted that they had never come across such a burlesque assault on the Master in their own literary traditions, where such satire would have been, if not unthinkable, certainly unprintable.⁶⁴ To the list of developments in "early modern" Japan that seem to have parallels in the West, one should perhaps add burlesque as a literary genre, which also peaked in Europe about the turn of the nineteenth century.

It would be a mistake to associate the burlesque genre with a lack of culture, because it is not the absence of cultural seriousness but merely its clever negation through exaggeration and distortion of form. There were poetic circles in Edo where people from all walks of life mingled as long as they were "well-versed," literary clubs that were themselves symbolic negations of the everyday world. At

these parties identity and status markers, including personal names, were left behind, and members donned *geimei*, literally “performance/skill/art names,” as they took on a different persona. One person could thus “play” a number of personas, adopting a different name in each cultural practice as if changing a kimono. One encounters this phenomenon across many art forms of commoners, in the circles specializing in the tea ceremony, flower arrangement, *nō* dance, and so on. It is hard to think of an art form that once was the preserve of the nobility and the upper warrior strata that was not diffused and taken over by commoners. The phenomenon includes court music,⁶⁵ for Sorai played the *shō*, an instrument used in a *gagaku* court music ensemble, but he unceremoniously confided to a friend that “the sound of his playing the *shō* terrified his cat.”⁶⁶

The play with form takes place in other art traditions as well. One easily detects a certain lightheartedness about function and frame. Kimono (*kosode*) can function as room decorations when, hung on clothes racks, they display their panoramic designs, which in themselves seem to disregard frame. Many kimono scenes strike across the surface, as it were, seemingly with total disregard of the vestment’s sleeve, shoulder, back, or front. The design wraps around and flows over the material contours, very much like a tattoo plays with the body form. Both present themselves as playful forms of disrespect for frame. Likewise in the satirical booklets illustration and text are not separated by clear boundaries; textual stalactites drip into the scenes that mount up into the writing.

Dishes are intended to function as containers, to hold things, and when aesthetically decorated, they become art objects to be admired. Some Japanese artisans succeeded in eliciting not only admiration but also a smile by cleverly confounding the container with what is contained. The content is already in the container in a Nabeshima ware example on which a white radish is elegantly drawn (cat. 18), its form seeking to merge with the form of the dish. And the container becomes the content in the Utsusugawa ware plate that nearly disappears into a melon shape (cat. 34). Here, as in Norinaga’s theory of the *kami*, the object absorbs the referent.

POPULAR AND FINE ART

Many of the activities discussed above fall within the category of folk art or performative arts. *Gei* or *geinō* is the Japanese term that expresses this best, for it emphasizes “skills.” In the early Tokugawa period performers, or *geisha*, were predominantly nonstatus people (*hinin*), many of whom combined their “art” with some form of mendicancy⁶⁷ and various degrees of piety or trickery (cat. 237). As alluded to earlier, such practices were often referred to as a “Way,” a term meant to give them a spiritual seriousness, generational depth, and social dignity and thus separate them from purely mundane pursuits such as plain begging.

The various Ways and their aura may create the impression that the art field in Tokugawa Japan was extraordinarily vast. Yet it was perhaps not as encompassing then as we might think today. For example — to limit the discussion to pictorial traditions — *ukiyoe*, or pictures from the “floating world” of entertainment and leisure, might appear to be the most representative art of the time, but this was not the case. These single-sheet woodblock prints were sold cheaply, like posters, and were thought of not as art but as eye-popping advertisements for actors, courtesans, and other popular themes. At the same time, *Nanga* — literally “southern pictures,” after a Chinese style of the Song period — would likewise not have been considered as genuine art by painters of the Kano school associated with the shogunate, but the genre was also called *Bunjinga*, “literati painting,” an indication of cultural ambition,

which would position it at a distance from the ukiyoe. Indeed a painter like Shiba Kōkan (1747 – 1818) decided he had to abandon ukiyoe altogether in order to be taken seriously as an artist.⁶⁸ Simplifying somewhat, one might say that ukiyoe were located closer to Hokusai's books of random sketches (*manga*) and thus, in the eyes of the *bunjin* or literati, at the opposite end of the pictographic tradition. The art field's topography looked different depending on one's position in it. It was not clear where its borders lay.

The ideal of the pure Nanga artist is one who paints for himself or herself (in late Tokugawa, there were some women Nanga painters).⁶⁹ Nanga should express an inner state of quietude, removed from the hustle and bustle of everyday (city) life. The proper subject matter, which was shared by professional painters, was dictated by that social distance which is the necessary condition to achieve an internal mental unfetteredness.

The distinction between *manga* (or ukiyoe) and Nanga was not that one was produced for the market and thus tainted by commercialism, whereas the other was art proper, the disinterested work of amateurs. By the end of the eighteenth century *manga* cartoonists and Nanga painters were both professionals in the sense that their wares were for sale or commissioned. The ideal of the amateur Nanga painter seeking to give expression in a contemplative manner to a finely cultivated self was not what mattered for most Tokugawa-era painters whose subsistence depended on their sales. What separated the one from the other was, perhaps more than anything else, the subject matter and possibly the buyers.

Nature usually fills the whole space of a literati painting (see cat. 156), and representations of nature, large and small (but mainly large), poured out vistas of mountain scenery, forests, mountain rivers, and distant waterfalls, or sometimes close-ups of twigs and bushes with birds and flowers. Lofty, distant views from above and from afar predominate, eliciting a detached uninvolvedness, inviting one to sit back, rest the eye, and contemplate.

Humans are barely there, if at all. One usually discovers them later as one peruses the landscape, not on first sight, and they are invariably men, elderly men, never women or children. Specifically, they are gentlemen, men at leisure, sometimes reading, but often in the act of contemplation or on their way to the mountains to contemplate, to attend to their minds, by and for themselves. They are solitary men, never in crowds — only trees and foliage appear in great multitudes; at most one can find small groups of close friends relaxing in the shade by a riverbank. The larger society does not exist in these paintings, and neither does the activity that occupies most other people in society: work or labor. In contrast, Hokusai's sketches and prints cataloguing every kind of labor for itself (cats. 106, 107) belong to a different cultural, social, and thereby artistic and imaginary universe.

Nanga paintings, for the most part, do not tell stories either. History as event is not to be found. Everyday life as event is absent too. Nature is uneventful, timeless: no thunderstorms, no dramatic sunsets; at most a distant, cloudy mist. Mist that hangs. It does not move, it just is. Nature is not active, and it is without striking colors; its only drama, if that is the right word, is the imposing but still majesty of mountains and their forests — nature not worked over by human activity, not for productivity nor for cultural enjoyment: neither paddy fields nor Japanese gardens.

Typically devoid of narrative content — whether it be historical, quotidian, or natural — these paintings are thus devoid of references to human practice. Rather than re-present, make present again, or bring objects nearer for close observation, the landscape paintings (arguably Nanga's most treated

cat. 156
 Uragami Gyokudō
Frozen Clouds, Sifted Snow,
 c. 1811–1812, hanging scroll;
 ink on paper,
 133.5 x 56.2 (52 1/2 x 22 1/8),
 Kawabata Foundation, Kanagawa,
 National Treasure





cat. 262
 Tōshūsai Sharaku,
The Actors Nakajima Wadaemon
as Bōdara Chōzaemon and
Nakamura Konozō as
Gon of the Kanagawayaya, 1794,
 color woodblock print,
 37.5 x 25.1 (14⁷/₈ x 9⁷/₈),
 Tokyo National Museum,
 Important Cultural Property

subject) distance the viewer from the object in order to create the contemplative space, so that one could say that here pictorialization creates for the viewer a distancing rather than a familiarizing effect.

Art, like many other discourses (philosophical, legal, or ethical), introduces a quasi-ontological divide into reality by what it judges relevant for treatment, which it thereby “ennobles” and elevates above the rest of common experience, while, conversely, through nontreatment, other wonderful items are kept ordinary, commonplace, and outside the frame. It would be incorrect to view ukiyoe as a kind of conscious protest against Nanga by an avant-garde seeking access to the field of art. Yet the fact remains that it affirmed and celebrated precisely what Nanga denied treatment.

In subject matter, style, execution, and effect, ukiyoe aesthetics stands at the antipode from the high aesthetics of Nanga. It is about what Nanga is not: city life and street people, commoners in their place in the division of labor, well-known living figures of the cultural demimonde — sumo wrestlers, courtesans, kabuki actors (see cats. 261, 262). These woodblock prints are not about being in a state of quietude, which is exaggerated in Nanga pictures through idealization, but about doing and activity, which the ukiyoe artists emphasize by overdrawing their dynamic sexual and theatrical qualities.

Ukiyoe do not avoid feelings. They often portray passion; they are about sensual pleasure and the body, not at all about spiritual refinement or the mind. Their colors, ideally absent or subdued in Nanga, consecrate the realm of the senses, ranging from the pleasing to the sensual and the carnal; they stand for plain pleasure rather than rarefied enjoyment. Ukiyoe are about actual events — historical (vendettas), episodic (festivals, celebrations, traveling on the Tōkaidō road), or natural (rain or snow scenes). They are about human, social practice. Because they have narrative as their essential ingredient, they do not induce the viewer into contemplation. Instead, they arouse the emotions, eliciting identification with the subjects represented, bringing the viewer closer to the social and emotional plurality of the real world. These colorful handbills give this world new valence in and for itself by objectifying it in representation, and by providing it with its own exaggerated nobility separate from the spiritual world that Nanga art stood for.

Ukiyoe “non-art” was only given membership into the field of art accidentally, and only after the demise of the Tokugawa period, when ukiyoe prints were discovered by artists in Europe who were struggling to transform their own art field in the late nineteenth century. Once certified as art by Europeans, the ambiguity that in the past had surrounded the artistic status of Japanese woodblock prints was removed: these works have come to represent Tokugawa art par excellence — and deservedly so, for this was the period when commoners put their mark on the world of culture for the first time in Japanese history.

1

For the social, economic, and demographic history of Edo, see Takeo Yazaki, *Social Change and the City in Japan: From Earliest Times through the Industrial Revolution* (Tokyo, 1968), chaps. 5 and 6.

2

Allan Grapard, *The Protocol of the Gods: A Study of the Kasuga Cult in Japanese History* (Berkeley, 1992).

3

Neil McMullin estimates that more than 25 percent of the total land area in Japan belonged to temples and shrines during the Muro-machi period (*Buddhism and the State in Sixteenth-Century Japan* [Princeton, 1984], 23, 251). During the Tokugawa period, which saw a great increase in the number of temples, this percentage dropped to 2.5.

4

Ikegami Eiko, *The Taming of the Samurai: Honorific Individualism and the Making of Modern Japan* (Cambridge, Mass., 1995), 65.

5

Dale Slusser, “Collecting Power in the Field of Chanoyu” (master’s thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1994).

6

Herman Ooms, *Tokugawa Ideology: Early Constructs, 1570 – 1680* (Princeton, 1985), 44.

7

Ooms 1985, chap. 2.

8

Karen Gerhart, *The Eyes of Power: Art and Tokugawa Authority* (Honolulu, in press).

9

Ogyū Sorai, *Master Sorai’s Responsals: An Annotated Translation of “Sorai sensei tômonsho,”* trans. Samuel H. Yamashita (Honolulu, 1994), 83.

10

Maeda Tsutomu, *Kinsei Nihon no jugaku to heigaku* (Tokyo, 1996).

11

Sorai 1994, 41.

12

Ooms 1985, 297. For a discussion of Takagi Shōsaku’s similar views, see Herman Ooms, *Tokugawa Village Practice: Class, Status, Power, Law* (Berkeley, 1996), 93–96.

13

For the translation of the status regulations of one domain, see Robert K. Sakai et al., *The Status System and Social Organization of Satsuma: A Translation of the “Shūmon Tefuda Aratame Jōmoku”* (Honolulu, 1975). For cultural status legislation, see Ooms 1996, 177–178, 199–201, 265–267, 339–345.

14

In the so-called *kokudaka* system the productivity of each daimyo’s domain and the shogun’s domain (used as a basis for tribute levies) was converted into the equivalent of a measure of rice (*oku* equal to 180 liters). Each domain’s *kokudaka* was the total productivity of all its villages, and ultimately of all individual fields, while the whole country’s wealth was the total of all *kokudaka*.

15

“The total amount of goods is limited, and those of fine quality are few, while coarse goods are many. Therefore, if one established institutions whereby one had people of elevated status use the fine goods (from clothing, to food, to housing) and those of despised status the bad goods, the number of the former by nature being small while that of the latter is big, if the fewer people use the fewer things and the more numerous people use the more numerous things, then, following reason, nothing will stand in the way for the things of this country to be used by all the people of this country to satisfy their needs” (Ogyū Sorai, *Seidan*, in *Nihon shisō taikai* [hereafter NST] 36 [Tokyo, 1973a], 313). Olivier Ansart emphasizes the economic function of rites in Sorai’s thought, highlighting important Chinese precedents, some of them well known to Sorai (*L’empire du rite: La pensée politique d’Ogyu Sorai* [Paris, 1998]). See also, J. R. McEwan, *The Political Writings of Ogyū Sorai* (Cambridge, 1962), 38–40.

16

In the eighteen years between 1703 and 1721, Edo’s two largest theaters burned to the ground eight times; in the 1710s no fewer than 1,008 wards, out of a total of some 1,600, were destroyed by fire. The Yoshiwara pleasure quarter (five townships) burned down eighteen times during the last century of Tokugawa rule, or on the average of once every five years. See Nishiyama Matsunosuke, *Edo Culture: Daily Life and Diversions in Urban Japan, 1600–1868* (Honolulu, 1997), 27, 29, 60. Edo’s two biggest fires occurred in 1657 — when four hundred townships, more than nine hundred warrior residences, and the shogunal castle burned down — and in 1772, when over one third of the city went up in flames (*Kokushi daijiten*, vol. 13 [Tokyo, 1992], 757, 759).

17

Englebert Kaempfer, traveling in Japan in 1690–1692, gives a detailed description of a procession he encountered on his return from Edo in 1692 (*History of Japan Together with the Description of the Kingdom of Siam, 1690–92*, vol. 2 [Glasgow, 1906], 332–335). In the two months of heaviest travel (the fourth and sixth) no fewer than 106 daimyo took the Tōkaidō road (Toshio G. Tsukahira, *Feudal Control in Tokugawa Japan: The Sankin Kōtai System* [Cambridge, Mass., 1970], 71). Other occasions for pomp and magnificence were shogunal progresses to the Nikkō shrine for Ieyasu. A contemporary description of the 1774 procession, no doubt exaggerated, reported 230,000 porters, 620,000 foot soldiers, and 35,000 horses, stretching all the way from Edo to Nikkō, some one hundred miles away (Watanabe Hiroshi, “Goikō’ to shōchō: Tokugawa seiji taisei no ichi sokumen, *Shisō*, 740, no. 2 [1986], 138).

18

Ooms 1996, 177, 200–202.

19

Ooms 1996, 108. For gifts given by the daimyo and shogunal relative Matsudaira Sadanobu when he obtained a seat in the shogunal bureaucracy, see Herman Ooms, *Charismatic Bureaucrat: A Political Biography of Matsudaira Sadanobu, 1758–1829* (Chicago, 1975), 162–163.

20

Yasunaga Toshinobu, *Andō Shōeki, Social and Ecological Philosopher of Eighteenth-Century Japan* (Tokyo, 1992), 123, 248.

21

This thesis is developed by Susan B. Hanley and Kozo Yamamura in their *Economic and Demographic Change in Preindustrial Japan, 1600–1868* (Princeton, 1977).

22

The forced urban concentration of the samurai was one of several measures devised by the daimyo and shogun to control their vassals better as salaried dependents. The measure denied them the degree of autonomy that they would have had with subinfeudation, as in European feudalism.

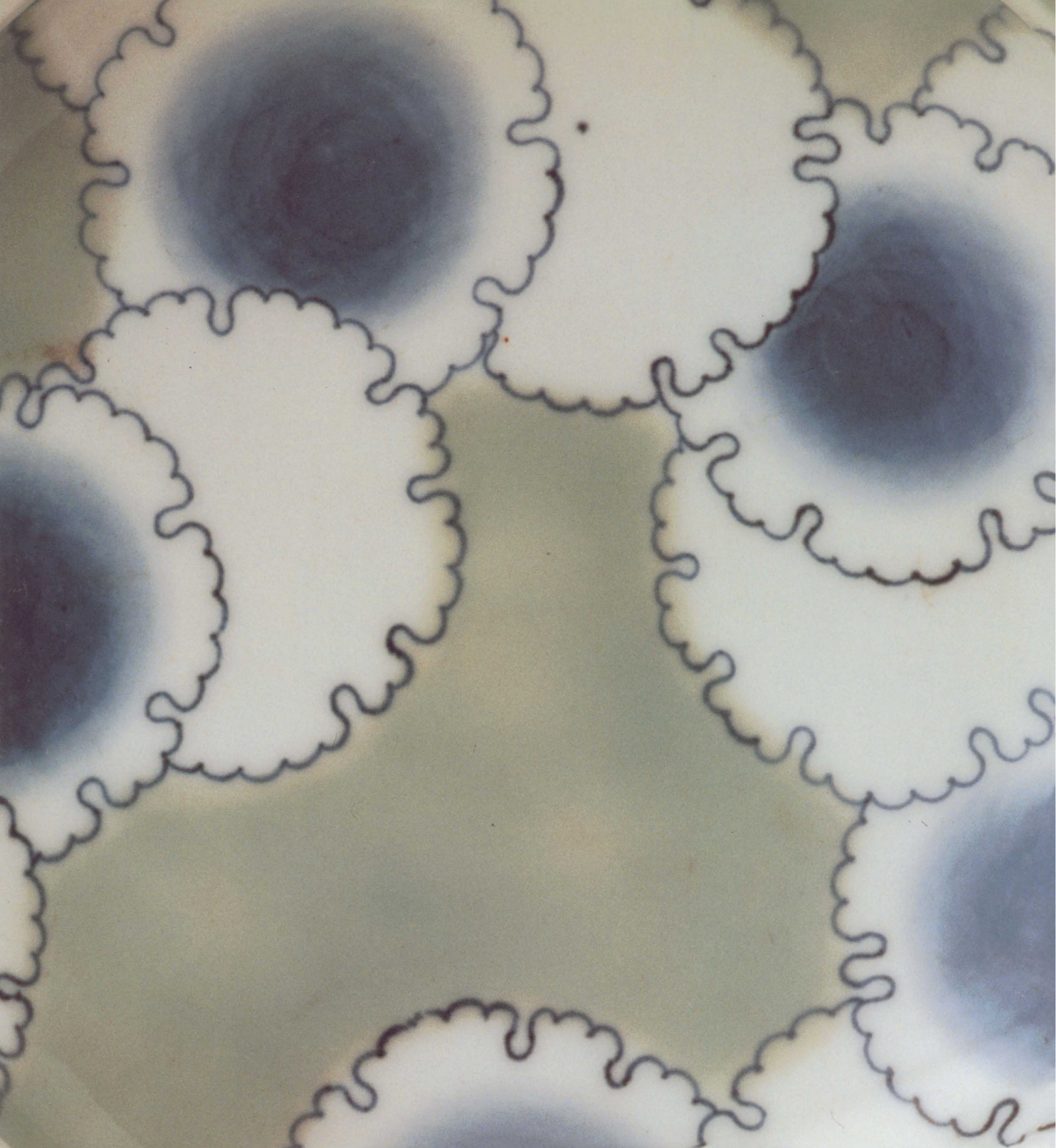
23

The initiative to round up all prostitutes and gather them in one place under government supervision came from a commoner. He suggested it to the Edo city commissioner in 1612. Five years later he was appointed headman of the five townships that constituted the Yoshiwara district. Tsukada Takashi, *Mibun-sei shakai to shimin shakai: Kinsei Nihon no shakai to hō* (Tokyo, 1992), 100.

24

For instance, Tadano Makuzu (1763–1825), the daughter of a doctor, mingled with poets, connoisseurs, nativists, castaways, and gamblers who visited her home, but she also served as maid-in-waiting in the women’s quarters of two daimyo for ten years; her younger sister served the younger sister of Matsudaira Sadanobu, chief shogunal councilor (1787–1793). Suzuki Yoneko, “Kaidai,” in *Tadano Makuzu shū*, ed. Suzuki Yoneko (Tokyo, 1994), 545, 546, 550.

- 25 This role was played yearly by generations of actors called Ichikawa Danjūrō, who became identified with the character (Nishiyama 1997, 49, 214–219).
- 26 Kaiho Seiryō, *Keikodan*, in Honda Toshiaki, *Kaiho Seiryō*, NST 44 (Tokyo, 1970), 232–233.
- 27 In 1775 a samurai enumerated seventy-four leisure activities in which one might indulge (Nishiyama 1997, 48).
- 28 McEwan 1962, 50–52.
- 29 “If the root [read “agriculture”] is slighted, and the branch [read “commerce”] is favored, the province will decline, and the resulting mob of merchants will become the bane of the province.... Even lords, with all their power, are no match for merchants” (Sorai 1994, 65, 68).
- 30 Kaiho 1970, 222. See also Tsunoda Ryusaku et al., comps. *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, vol. 1 (New York, 1958), 491–492.
- 31 Kaiho 1970, 241, italics added.
- 32 Kaiho 1970, 222.
- 33 Nishiyama 1997, 15.
- 34 Susan B. Hanley, *Everyday Things in Premodern Japan: The Hidden Legacy of Material Culture* (Berkeley, 1997), 28–29.
- 35 Hanley 1997, 46–47.
- 36 Koizumi Kazuko, *Traditional Japanese Furniture* (Tokyo, 1986), 172, 173, quoted in Hanley 1997, 48.
- 37 Hanley 1997, 44.
- 38 Hanley 1997, 44–45.
- 39 Nishiyama 1997, chap. 8.
- 40 Nishiyama 1997, 152.
- 41 Nishiyama 1997, 150.
- 42 Nishiyama 1997, 153, 166, 167.
- 43 Nishiyama Matsunosuke, “Kinsei no yūgei-ron,” in *Kinsei geidō-ron*, NST 61 (Tokyo, 1972), 616–618.
- 44 Nishiyama 1997, 148, 150.
- 45 Both quotations can be found in Kurozumi Makoto, “The Nature of Early Tokugawa Confucianism,” *Journal of Japanese Studies* 20, no. 2 (1994), 369. Kurozumi comments: “For these scholars, the question whether form is natural or man-made, innate or acquired, is beside the point. ‘Form’ is a condensed modality of being, generated by both nature and man, a locus where these two generative forces converge.” For a treatment of form and Japanese culture from different angles, see Minamoto Ryōen, ed., *Kata to Nihon bunka* (Tokyo, 1992).
- 46 *Sankin kōtai: Kyodai toshi Edo no naritachi* [exh. cat., Tokyo-Edo Museum] (Tokyo, 1997), 67. This exhibition catalogue gives plenty of information on all aspects of the alternate attendance system; for data on expenditures, see 100, 101, 104, 131; and Tsukahira 1970, chap. 4.
- 47 “Sono jitsu shogun wa mataku oide ni naru no yara, naranai no yara, wakarya shimasen no sa” (Watanabe 1986, 154, 143).
- 48 Sorai 1994, 58.
- 49 Sorai 1973a, 307, 308.
- 50 Zeami, *On the Art of the Nō Drama: The Major Treatises of Zeami*, trans. J. Thomas Rimer and Yamazaki Masakazu (Princeton, 1984), 66–68, 71–72, 77. See also Sagara Tōru, “Kata no keisei o kangaeru,” in Kyōritsu Joshi Daigaku, *Bungaku geijutsu* 12 (Feb. 1989), 9–18.
- 51 Ogyū Sorai, *Benmei*, NST 36 (Tokyo, 1973b), 70, 71, 178.
- 52 “In the Way of the Sages, when evil thoughts arise in one’s heart but one observes the ritual prescriptions without cultivating those thoughts and committing any evil, one is [still] a gentleman.” Dazai Shundai, *Bendōsho*, in *Nihon rinri ihen* 6 (Tokyo, 1902), 220.
- 53 Mencius 6A 7:8.
- 54 Ogyū 1973b; 541; see also Ogyū 1994, 57.
- 55 Motoori Norinaga *zenshū*, vol. 9 (Tokyo, 1968), 125, italics added.
- 56 One could say that Norinaga leveled a critique *avant la lettre* of late nineteenth-century European theories of animism but was somehow in line with Saussurian semiology.
- 57 Timon Screech writes about a vogue of “collection and study of exotic flora, fauna or minerals... the amassing of specimens became a craze in Japan” (*The Western Scientific Gaze and Popular Imagery in Later Edo Japan: The Lens within the Heart* [Cambridge, 1996], 137, 141, 144–145). Hiraga Gennai “organised annual colloquia for natural-history enthusiasts... called pharmacopaeic assemblies (*yakuhin-e*),” and published *Varieties of Matter* (*Butsurui hinshitsu*) in 1763. See also (*Shūkan*) Asahi hyakka *Nihon no Rekishi* 82 (Tokyo, 1987).
- 58 Andrew L. Markus, “The Carnival of Edo: Misemono Spectacles from Contemporary Accounts,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 45, no. 2 (1985), 499–541.
- 59 Nishiyama 1997, 241–244.
- 60 See remarks by Yamaji Kōzō in Kyoto burakushi kenkyūjohen, ed., *Kinsei no minshū to geinō* (Kyoto, 1989), 226–228.
- 61 Nishiyama 1997, 229–230.
- 62 Nishiyama 1997, 237, 240. For the establishment of *rakugo yose*, see Heinz Morioka and Miyoko Sasaki, *Rakugo: The Popular Narrative Art in Japan* (Cambridge, Mass., 1990), 240–249.
- 63 Some of this analysis was inspired by Henri Bergson’s philosophical considerations in his *Le rire: Essai sur la signification du comique* (Paris, 1969 [1899]), 20, 39, 94, 97.
- 64 Kōshi jima toki ni aizome, in Kibyōshi, *sharebon-shū*, in *Nihon koten bungaku taikei* 59 (Tokyo, 1958), 180 (translated as “In Due Course for Confucius and Indigo Patterns” in Susan Griswold, “Urban Fiction as Social Text: The World of Kibyōshi in Eighteenth-Century Edo” [Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1988]).
- 65 Nishiyama 1972, 612–614.
- 66 Kate Wildman Nakai, “The Naturalization of Confucianism in Tokugawa Japan: The Problem of Sinocentrism,” *The Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 40, no. 1 (1980), 176.
- 67 See Yamamoto Naotomo’s remark in “Kinsei hisabetsumin-shi e no shiten; zadankai,” in Kyoto burakushi kenkyūjo (Kyoto, 1989), 230.
- 68 Calvin L. French, *Shiba Kokan: Artist, Innovator, and Pioneer in the Westernization of Japan* (New York, 1974), 29.
- 69 Patricia Fister, *Japanese Women Artists: 1600–1900* (Lawrence, Kans., 1988), chaps. 6, 7.



Traditional Japanese patterns had

**Ornamental
Culture: Style
and Meaning
in Edo Japan**

NICOLE COOLIDGE

ROUSMANIERE

a clear resonance with the type of design sought in later nineteenth-century Europe and America. Bypassing narrative and pictorial reality, a European movement led by Owen Jones in the 1870s attempted to establish a direct connection between ornament and understanding.¹ The aim was to bring about harmony through decoration, particularly through patterns that forged a relationship between motif and ground. “The space was to be shallow and the relationships between figure and ground were to be defined by colors as much as shape, thus creating patterns in which figure and ground were almost indistinguishable.”² According to Christopher Dresser, the famous English designer, who had extensive experience in Japan:

Those works which are most fully of mental origin . . . are those which are the most noble. . . . Pictorial art can, in its highest development, only symbolize imagination or emotion by the representation of idealized reality, [but] true ornamentation is of purely mental origin and consists of symbolized imagination or emotion only. I therefore argue that ornamentation is not only a fine art. . . . It is indeed a higher art than that practiced by the pictorial artist, as it is wholly of mental origin.³

Heated discourses on decoration in America and Europe at this time were certainly informed by the Japanese conception of ornament. Japan had emerged on the world stage in 1854 when Commodore Perry and the American navy landed in Yokohama and demanded that Japan

Opposite: detail of *Dish with falling snowflakes design* (cat. 19)

open trade relations with America. The island nation seemed to hold great potential in the imaginations of Americans and Europeans. It enjoyed an advanced intellectual and arts culture that had blossomed during the two and a half centuries of the Edo period, although western countries were familiar with only a small selection of its porcelain and lacquer goods.

Forced to accept a series of unequal trade agreements, the Tokugawa government failed, and a new regime, one of “enlightened rule” (Meiji), was installed. The Meiji era was characterized by an open-door policy toward American and European culture, and a new ideology and even vocabulary were introduced that still exist today. An official announcement in 1873 coined the term *bijutsu* (noble skill) — derived from the German *schöne kunst* — which would be used to encompass what was known in the West as music, painting, sculpture, and the literary arts.⁴ For the applied arts, the term *kōgei* (mechanical skill) was used. These words were especially created for Japan to participate in the Vienna International Exposition of 1873 to help raise much-needed foreign cash reserves by stimulating “arts” trade. Japan participated in numerous international expositions, sending technically advanced, often detailed, and intricate objects that were geared toward what was perceived to be European taste.⁵ The Japanese entries were highly successful, and along with other exports they helped feed a boom in *japonisme*, confirming Japanese arts in American and European eyes as being decorative (applied) as opposed to fine (high) art.

It is thus ironic that during the same period a new word for decoration (*sōshoku*) was introduced, based on European precedents, and is still in use today. Previously no Japanese word existed to separate decorative from artistic production or to indicate a hierarchical ordering of craft media as such. Skill was more important than medium. The term *kazari*, best translated as “ornament” rather than “decoration,” had been in use in Japan since at least the eighth century and is based on a different concept than its English counterpart. Fundamentally, *kazari* refers not only to the object but also to the use of the object, to the act of viewing, using, or adorning the object. *Kazari* takes its form in process, and the viewer is an active participant — through prior knowledge, parody, elegant re-creations, play, performance.

To understand the role of ornament and the meaning of Edo style, it is necessary to appreciate that the Japanese arts are not meant to be merely visual but to appeal to all of the senses. In Ogata Kōrin and Ogata Kenzan’s square dish (cat. 25) the viewer is meant to touch and eat from the dish, read the poem, see the crane, and hear the crane’s cry. Similarly, we might hear the insects rubbing their wings in the Ogawa Haritsu boxes or the music from the blind man’s *shamisen* in the *Hikone Screen* (cats. 37, 233).

Another aspect of Japanese aesthetics that informs both ornament and style is the quality of incompleteness. Japanese poetry and arts were stimulated by the transience of natural beauty, as noted by Yoshida Kenkō, a Shinto priest, in his famous *Essays in Idleness* (1330–1333):

Are we to look at cherry blossoms only in full bloom, the moon only when it is cloudless? To long for the moon while looking at the rain, to lower the blinds and be unaware of the passing of the spring — these are even more deeply moving. Branches about to blossom or gardens strewn with faded flowers are worthier of our admiration. . . . People commonly regret that the cherry blossoms scatter or that the moon sinks in the sky, and this is natural; but only an exceptionally insensitive man would say, “This branch and that branch have lost their blossoms. There is nothing worth seeing now.” . . . The moon that appears close to dawn after we have long waited for it moves us more profoundly than the full moon shining cloudless over a thousand leagues. . . .

Are we to look at the moon and the cherry blossoms with our eyes alone? How much more evocative and pleasing it is to think about the spring without stirring from the house, to dream of the moonlight though we remain in our room!⁶

cat. 37
 Ogawa Haritsu,
*Writing-paper box and writing
 box with dragonfly design*,
 second quarter of
 eighteenth century, lacquer
 on wood with makie,
 writing-paper box: 12.7 x 40 x 30.8
 (5 x 15³/₄ x 12¹/₈);
 writing box: 4.4 x 25.5 x 16.7
 (1³/₄ x 10 x 6⁵/₈),
 Agency for Cultural Affairs,
 Tokyo



The beauty of cherry blossoms and the moon is enhanced by their fundamentally mutable nature. Moreover, the power of cherry blossoms and the moon can be experienced not only through actual contact, but perhaps even more strongly through the imagination or memory. According to Kenkō's aesthetics, a poem about cherry blossoms can be more deeply satisfying than seeing the blossoms directly. Katsushika Ōi's *Cherry Blossoms at Night* (cat. 281) depicts a woman writing a poem. Her robe (*furisode*) is decorated with a pattern of scattered cherry blossoms, and several branches of a cherry tree are illuminated in the middle distance against a starry night sky. But the picture is completed only in one's imagination and thus gains its strength through the viewer's active engagement.

Finally, the transcendence of formal boundaries between media is apparent in most Japanese art forms. For screen paintings a designer or painter and possibly a workshop execute the paintings, while a papermaker, woodworker, lacquerers, and metalworkers fabricate the frame. Woodblock printing involves a designer, calligrapher, block carver, colorist, printer, and so on. Multitudes of artisans are needed to create a porcelain dish, from kiln construction to applying colored enamels. In addition, many artists worked in more than one medium, as Ogata Kōrin did in ceramics, lacquers, textiles, and paintings (cats. 26, 28, 29, 140).

THE ORIGINS OF KAZARI

Tsuji Nobuo has spent the last decade disseminating his revolutionary ideas on Japanese aesthetics based on the central concept of *kazari* — what he defines as “a will to decorate.”⁷ Tsuji has brought to the fore the importance of action and temporality in *kazari*, definitively separating it from its English equivalents of decoration or ornament, both of which have come to be seen as secondary and static additions to a work of art. The problems inherent in trying to translate such concepts as decoration into different



cat. 29
Ogata Kōrin,
*Kosode with autumn flowers
and grasses*,
early eighteenth century,
hand-painted ink and
color on silk twill,
147.2 x 130.2 (58 x 51 1/4),
Tokyo National Museum,
Important Cultural Property

languages and categories were glossed in a lecture given in 1914 by Taki Seiichi at Tokyo Imperial University. Responding to Ernest Fenollosa, a Harvard-trained scholar who taught aesthetics in Japan during the Meiji period, Taki related:

When I met Fenollosa in Tokyo near the end of his life, he told me that Japanese art was abstract and decorative, and should be most highly appreciated as applied arts. However we Japanese think that this view is not correct. The special character of Japanese art is spirituality; therefore it is abstract. Even the famous Kōrin folding screen painting of Irises is indeed an object of abstract beauty and must be recognized as possessing a surprising strength that is more than mere decoration.⁸

Fenollosa and his student Okakura Kakuzō played an important role in reshaping Japanese art history (and both became curators at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston). Certainly Fenollosa came to Japan with later nineteenth-century ideas about beauty and realism representing truth and therefore being morally superior. Taki countered this claim by asserting the spirituality underlying Japanese art as the source of its abstraction.

The fundamental problem lies in the term “decorative” and in the culturally perceived function of art. To Fenollosa the abstract nature of Japanese art perhaps signified a deficiency, whereas Taki, invoking Kōrin’s irises (see fig. 4 in Melinda Takeuchi’s essay), discerned it as spiritual. Kōrin’s work is indeed instructive. The irises and the plank bridge depicted on the screens refer to a chapter in the tenth-century *Tales of Ise* in which the hero of the narrative, Ariwara no Narihira, writes a poem about emotions inspired by a visit to a beautiful place. In this sense the painting falls under the category of depictions of famous places (*meishoe*). Kōrin paints only irises and planks, however. The viewer would have to be familiar with the *Tales of Ise* to understand the scene and appreciate its meaning, spiritual or otherwise. Thus certain traditional Japanese art forms are part of a commonality of shared knowledge. The images can be viewed as symbolic, but not decorative in the classic English sense.

The term *kazari* first appeared in the *Man’yōshū*, a late eighth-century poetry compilation. Several poems, or more correctly songs (*uta*), refer to the act of ornamentation (here the active form *kazashi*), particularly to ornamenting the hair with flowers. One poem describes a man and a woman placing plum and wisteria blossoms in each other’s hair. Another (number 1429) tells of cherry blossoms tied in the hair of girls and boys. Yet another (820) mentions plum blossoms that look as if they are blooming on someone’s head. In *Poems on the Flowers and Birds of the Twelve Months*, composed by the aristocratic poet Fujiwara no Teika in 1214, *kazari* still has the same meaning: “Even the sleeves of travelers who broke off cherry blossoms to decorate their hair have caught the scent that fills this spring sky.”⁹ *Kazari* is thus an act that interweaves man and nature in a “temporary re-creation” (*tsukurimono*). It transforms an ordinary object into something extraordinary. And it is the process of transformation, according to Tsuji, that is a spiritual operation, releasing one from the pressures of ordinary existence.

Kazari has been manifested in many ways throughout Japanese history, using fanciful and temporary re-creations such as the seasonal festivals that punctuate the Japanese calendar even today (see cat. 135). *Kazari* can also be experienced in an “extravagant act” (*fūryū*), recorded since the eighth century and evident during the Edo period in spontaneous circle dances, parades, and processions as well as in kabuki theater. And it can be expressed through “illusory re-creations” or parody (*mitate*) and

play (*asobi*). The use of parody grew more pronounced in the Edo period and may be seen in such works as the helmet in the shape of a upside-down red lacquer bowl (cat. 55) or Itō Jakuchū’s *Vegetable parinirvana*, or “Death of the Buddha” (cat. 121), in which the artist substituted a radish for the Buddha and various vegetables of the grieving mourners to achieve the desired effect.

In sum, *kazari*, depending on the time and the context, has many connotations, ranging from Buddhist paradise imagery to individual political machinations. Several basic precepts do apply, however: *kazari* is completed through the viewer’s (or user’s) active participation or knowledge; it evokes meaning beyond what is depicted; it involves play, parody, or spirituality; and it appeals to more than just the sense of sight.

THE BEGINNINGS
OF EDO STYLE

A new design style emerged in Japan to accommodate the taste of a samurai elite that began to dominate the political arena in the late sixteenth century and gained influence under the Tokugawa regime in the early seventeenth century. The style involved an interplay between ground and motif. Preferred motifs, which were generally isolated from a narrative context, had either auspicious or culturally assigned meanings. For example, an empty ox-drawn carriage on the cover of a lacquer box (cat. 6) refers to the imperial court and the late tenth- or early eleventh-century literary classic *Tale of Genji*, while a geometric ground and lotus leaf painted on a Kokutani-style dish (cat. 9) promote both good fortune and a sense of exoticism, generated by the Chinese derivation of the patterns and the Buddhist connotations of the lotus leaf. These two objects date to roughly the same period and may be understood on various levels, though prior knowledge is necessary to perceive the full meaning. This type of decoration combined designs based on Chinese taste in the medieval period (*karamono-suki*) with motifs reflecting a “love of the exotic” (*ikoku-shumi*) to create a style that could be comprehended by a broad section of the population.

During the Edo period demand increased in most craft industries, prompted in part by the large-scale building projects begun by Oda Nobunaga (1534 – 1582) with the construction of Azuchi Castle on the shore of Lake Biwa near Kyoto. Nobunaga commissioned the Kano master Eitoku to decorate the entire interior of Azuchi in 1576, which took the painter and his workshop over three years to complete.¹⁰ Nobunaga and his elaborate castle both survived only a few years after construction, but a fifty-year period of castle building was launched, stimulating an ever-growing need for paintings, carvings, and objects to fill the grand spaces. As a result techniques were simplified and streamlined to facilitate larger output. The urbanization that accompanied and literally surrounded these castles required plentiful resources, both human and material. Many castle towns, such as Edo and Osaka, became important urban centers in the later 1700s, with permanent markets and systematized economies that employed monetary systems instead of barter.

The newly empowered merchant classes, including samurai and daimyo, all vied to establish themselves within three arenas: their local castle town, their domain, and the country as a whole. For the Tokugawa enterprise to succeed, it was essential to invent a mutually understandable visual vocabulary to display status and identity within this restructured society. This code could be manipulated to support a certain ideology, such as the use of Chinese symbolism to enforce Neo-Confucian policy, or it could be used to include and exclude others from the group. The symbols would have to be based on previously acknowledged ones, reconfigured to define a new power elite.

cat. 9
Dish with lotus leaf and
geometric pattern,
late 1640s,
Hizen ware porcelain,
Kokutani style,
33 (13) in diameter,
Idemitsu Museum of Arts,
Tokyo



The emerging Tokugawa government appears to have used such a system to great effect. Controlling symbolism (even *kazari*) to its advantage, the Tokugawa government prescribed that consumption of luxury goods be correlated with status (as defined by the government), issuing sumptuary regulations (*ken'yakurei*) periodically from the beginning of their rule.¹¹ The alternate attendance system enacted at the same time required all daimyo to maintain residences both in their domains and in Edo, which served as a geographical reminder that the power of the realm lay with the Tokugawa in Edo. In addition, a visual system was consciously employed to demonstrate this power in two-dimensional designs and architectural spaces, particularly in government-commissioned monuments such as the mortuary shrines of the Tokugawa in Nikkō, discussed below. The new system of aesthetics was also employed by others within the culture. While the Tokugawa defined the new symbolism, specific luxury goods, as recognized signifiers of wealth and status, were possessed by a wider circle than ever before.

Starting with the Battle of Sekigahara in 1600, which placed Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542–1616) at the helm of state, the first half of the seventeenth century was a pivotal time for the Tokugawa regime. The Kan'ei era (1624–1644) saw the first full flowering of peace in the Japanese archipelago as well as the first steps toward the creation of a unified entity out of the 260-odd semiautonomous nation-states. By midcentury the Tokugawa hegemony was ensured for the next two hundred years. Initially, the vitalized spirit of the Momoyama period (1573–1615) persisted in *kazari*, but as new realities became central in the Tokugawa period, other styles of ornamentation became popular.

Part of the strategy of the Tokugawa shogunate, from Ieyasu onward, was the incorporation of Neo-Confucian ideology. This policy was both symbolically and physically realized by Ieyasu’s grandson, Iemitsu, the third shogun, in the 1630s. Hayashi Razan, the famed Neo-Confucian scholar who served the Tokugawa government under Iemitsu, recorded his thoughts concerning the mortuary shrine that Iemitsu had redesigned for his grandfather:

Everywhere in the new mausoleum are hundreds of examples of craftsmanship executed to perfection. There are pictures drawn from heaven and earth, in colors arrayed with myriad sorts of birds and beasts, grasses and trees, and a variety of awesome and strange creatures. It is splendid and dazzling. . . . If it were not grand and magnificent, it would not suffice in demonstrating his majesty and spiritual force to the common people. If its adornment were not beautiful, it would not suffice in proclaiming his achievements a hundred generations hence.¹²

This shrine, the Tōshōgū in Nikkō, represented one of the supreme examples of ornament during the early seventeenth century. It was designed to reflect Tokugawa Ieyasu’s apotheosis as the Tōshō Dai-gongen (Great Incarnation Illuminating the East) after his death in 1616. This title placed him in the Shinto pantheon, helping to establish his lineage’s right to rule in times of peace, with the endorsement of the imperial line, which continued in a primarily ceremonial role in Kyoto. Monuments were felt necessary to display openly this new divine status and proclaim the legitimacy of Tokugawa rule, as Razan stated, for “a hundred generations hence.” Ornament covering the Tokugawa mortuary was to bear the meaning of the monument itself.

An earlier mortuary for Ieyasu had been built between Kyoto and Edo — in Kunōzan near Sunpu, his home territory — but after only one year the shogun’s remains were moved to Nikkō and placed where his son, Hidetada, had built a small shrine. This relocation was strategic, for Nikkō lies 120 kilometers directly to the north of Edo, the new administrative center of Japan, and it had been the site of Shinto shrines for centuries and had been considered sacred since the medieval period. The Tōshōgū was built over the main shrine in Nikkō, ensuring its pride of place.

Starting with the tumuli of the fourth to sixth centuries, large mortuaries have had a long history in Japan as potent reminders of a leader’s right to rule. The direct prototype for the Nikkō Tōshōgū was the Hōkoku Shrine in Kyoto, built for the deification of Hideyoshi, Ieyasu’s immediate forerunner. Indeed Ieyasu died only a year after Hideyoshi’s son and heir perished. Ieyasu’s life and deification left an indelible imprint on the early Edo popular consciousness, and Iemitsu’s decision to enhance Hidetada’s original shrine in Nikkō created a greater display of wealth and strength, replete with visual symbols (*kazari*) that proclaimed not only Ieyasu’s personal power but, perhaps more important, the preeminence of his legacy.

The rebuilt Nikkō Tōshōgū, in keeping with the ornamental style of the period, was meant to be understood by the people as a manifestation of the glory of the realm. Renovations were made from 1634 to 1636 under the joint leadership of Kōra Munehiro, head of the shogun’s construction section and master carver (*horishi*), and Kano Tan’yū, head of the Kajibashi atelier of the Kano school of painting. These two master artists, the highest ranked professionally at the time, oversaw the construction and decoration of multiple buildings and gates with 500 major paintings and 5,173 carvings. The paintings reflect to various degrees the designs executed in the elaborate carvings.¹³ Materials included wood, lacquer, paint, metal, gold leaf, and cloisonné. The project mobilized all of the premier artisans in producing the ultimate statement of politically inspired ornament. Auxiliary shrines were later built in

Nagoya, Mito, Wakayama, and Hie. Even today the Nikkō Tōshōgū's continuing national importance is demonstrated by the Japanese government's designation of nine of its structures as National Treasures and forty-six as Important Cultural Properties.

The ornamentation was arranged to maximize its visual impact. Almost all of the decoration — paintings and especially carvings — was placed toward the front of the structures, where it would be most visible. There was also an emphasis on placing auspicious designs at entrances and windows. Three large gates leading into the inner sanctum of the shrine became increasingly ornate in closer proximity to the sacred space,¹⁴ a visual reinforcement of the spiritually symbolic function of the sanctuary.

The type of ornament employed at the Nikkō Tōshōgū can be divided into four categories: the human figure, animals, plants, and geometric designs. The human figural motifs, which are all Chinese, include mythical and historical beings. The majority of animals depicted are mythical, with the Chinese lion (*karajishi*) represented most often, and birds and dragons a close second. Ieyasu was born in the year of the tiger, and Iemitsu in the year of the dragon, both of which were important symbols of rule in China. Thus tigers and dragons appear often in the monument as personal symbols for the shogun. The plentiful bird depictions feature the mythical phoenix and the crane and hawk, which were symbols of the samurai. Images of plants, mostly of Chinese derivation, include various forms of especially peonies and camellias. The largest category of ornament used in the Tōshōgū, however, consists of geometric patterning, which covers most of the pillars and subsidiary spaces and forms the ground for most other motifs (fig. 1). A wide array of geometric designs is employed, but most are banded and include stylized floral repeats, Chinese grass scrolls (*karakusa*), *nyoi* heads (a Buddhist instruction wand), or latticework.

The pervasive use of geometric designs reveals the time and expense lavished on its placement and suggests its talismanic importance. Banded patterns on the entrance gates seem to assume a similar symbolic value. Twelve pillars support the middle gate (*yōmeimon*) en route to the inner sanctum, each



fig. 1
Carved ornament on a column
in the Nikkō Tōshōgū,
showing the *nyoi*-head pattern
in the background
and a roundel enclosing a
stylized crane

cat. 8
Large sake ewer with Chinese
lions and peony design,
c. 1640s, Hizen ware porcelain,
Kokutani style,
19.4 (7 ⁵/₈) high,
Agency for Cultural Affairs,
Tokyo,
Important Cultural Property



one completely covered with a carved ground of stylized nyoi heads overlaid with asymmetrically placed and occasionally overlapping roundels. The nyoi-head motif is turned upside down on one pillar, as if an exception to the rule would provide a kind of magical protection for the overall structure.¹⁵ Otherwise this pillar is identical to the other eleven. (A similar reversal of design motifs on one pillar within a group occurs on all of the gate structures in the Tōshōgū, demonstrating the importance of orientation and the inherent power assigned to kazari during this period.¹⁶) The roundel encloses a stylized crane spreading its wings against a geometric pattern in the background. A symbol of longevity, the crane is supposed to live for a thousand years.

In imagery related to that seen in the Nikkō Tōshōgū, two Chinese lions are depicted in the foreground of a seated portrait of Tokugawa Ieyasu (cat. 51), while brightly colored Chinese tigers and a Chinese-style peony scroll cover a Kokutani-style porcelain sake ewer (cat. 8). The richly colored red, green, and blue enamels and exotic motifs of the latter are reminiscent of the fantastic Chinese vocabulary used so effectively by the Tokugawa.

EARLY EDO
POPULAR STYLE

Another development during the Kan’ei era was the integration of foreign and bold Momoyama period designs into a domesticated context. This process is most visible in pleasure depiction screens (*yūrakuzu*), which were popular with the daimyo, samurai, and merchants.¹⁷ The format inevitably includes Japanese men and women at leisure, playing with exotic objects, dressed in dramatic textiles, enjoying the latest fads such as playing the shamisen or smoking. In other words, the screens represent a familiarization of the exotic.

A spectacular example of the genre is known as the *Hikone Screen* (cat. 233). Clearly based on a parody of the traditional Chinese concept of the Four Accomplishments of writing, painting, music, and board games, the scene depicts fashionable youths relaxing, playing a form of backgammon (*sugoroku*), writing love letters, walking a small dog. The first young girl in the composition (which is read from right to left) carries a blossoming cherry branch, perhaps to decorate an elaborate hairstyle in the traditional reading of kazari. The male youth leans on his long sword, an action far removed from the military spirit that dominated depictions of men a few decades earlier. The screen represents not just a parody of traditional Chinese accomplishments but a commentary on the past and present. The youths are all clothed in the latest fashions but set against a gold ground with no indication of setting. The only background as such is a medieval Kano-style Chinese landscape screen, which is folded in such a way as to enclose a blind musician.¹⁸ The past is encapsulated, even commodified. The present concerns revolve around fashion and ornament. A new age of leisure has arrived.

To summarize the shift in kazari from the taste of the ruling samurai in the first half of the seventeenth century to the more popular expression of pleasure and play in the later half of the century, Kokutani-style porcelains provide the perfect foil to the Nikkō Tōshōgū. Porcelain was first produced in Japan only in the second decade of the century, and the overglaze polychrome enamel technique was mastered by the 1640s. Thus the Kokutani style, produced from the 1640s to the 1660s, was an early manifestation of the art form. The porcelains were made and fired at the climbing kilns of the outer section of Arita in northwestern Kyushu.¹⁹

Two distinct categories of Kokutani-style porcelain were produced in separate stages. The first dates to the 1640s – 1650s and was based on Chinese patterns. Brightly colored overglaze enamels —

cat. 10
Large shallow bowl
 with chrysanthemum design,
 c. 1650s – 1660s,
 Hizen ware porcelain,
 aode Kokutani style,
 47.5 (18³/₄) in diameter,
 Idemitsu Museum of Arts,
 Tokyo



cat. 12
Large dish with birds,
tree, and waves design, c. 1650s,
 Hizen ware porcelain,
 aode Kokutani style,
 34.9 (13³/₄) in diameter,
 The Kyushu Ceramic Museum,
 Saga

usually red, blue, and green — were painted over the white porcelain ground, in designs of birds and flowers or Chinese figures within a geometric frame. The second stage, particularly the *aode* (blue green) Kokutani-style dishes dating to the 1650s – 1660s, appears to have been derived directly from painting sources. Many of the designs were influenced by the Kano school. The enamel colors were darker and resembled mineral pigments used on screen painting.²⁰

Two examples of the first type of Kokutani-style production are a sake ewer and a classic 1650s dish, both mentioned above (cats. 8, 9). Decorating the exterior of the latter is a stylized peony floral scroll similar to that seen on the sake ewer. The interior of the dish plays with spatial tensions by juxtaposing the underside of a naturalistically depicted lotus leaf against a ground of twelve different geometric designs contained within concentric and interlocking diamond shapes.

Three examples of *aode* Kokutani-style dishes are completely covered with saturated polychrome overglaze enamels. The most brilliantly colored piece (cat. 10) has a design on the interior that superimposes chrysanthemums on a yellow geometricized floral ground, encircled by a deep green stylized water pattern. There is tension between the naturalistically depicted motif and its geometric ground, and the saturated colors add to the overall feeling of richness. The palette of yellow and green appear to refer to the gold background and malachite pigment that are commonly seen in seventeenth-century Kano screen paintings. The two other examples (cats. 11, 12) use a similar style of *kazari* to achieve their impact.

The change in the approach to ornament in early and later Kokutani-style porcelain reflects changes also occurring in textile patterns and other craft media. Nagasaki Iwao writes: “In earlier styles color was generally subordinate to pattern; with the Kanbun style [1661 – 1673] the decorative function of color came to play an important role as background, supporting the pattern and bringing it into relief.”²¹ These changes demonstrate not only the fluidity of design motifs but also the encompassing nature of *kazari* in Japanese artistic culture.

MATURE
EDO STYLE

Mature Edo style made its first appearance during the Enpō era (1673 – 1681) and is perhaps best typified by designs that combine double meanings with spatial illusion. The importance of *kazari* as a visual code became more pronounced as the Edo population became more discriminating. The publication of prints, of textile design books (*hinagatabon*) (see fig. 2), and of illustrated fiction, humor, and parody (*kibyōshi* and *gesaku*) helped popularize specific styles of *kazari*.

Perhaps one of the most striking early examples of mature Edo style is a Hizen porcelain dish with a bold spider’s web design (cat. 15). The Chinese word for “spider’s web” was a homonym for “joy descending from heaven,” yet the effect here is of shattered glass or ice, with sixteen fractures radiating from the center. The pattern is reflected in the octagonal shape of the dish, but the main strength of the design is in the play between negative (white) and positive (blue) space. The asymmetry of the design is emphasized by two rim sections that are left unglazed, which creates another dynamic between the porcelain ground and the glazing pattern. For the first time, four Japanese characters on the base of this dish indicate that the dish was made in Japan during the Enpō era. The designation of a Japanese reign date — when previous Japanese-made porcelains bore spurious Chinese reign dates — reveals a new national consciousness.



fig. 2
Robe design published in an
early textile pattern book

cat. 15
Dish with spider's web design,
c. 1673 – 1681,
Hizen ware porcelain,
Koimari style,
21.1 (8 $\frac{1}{4}$) in diameter,
The Kyushu Ceramic Museum,
Saga



The visual interplay of surface and motif continued throughout the Edo period with increasing sophistication. Eiraku Hozen's water jar with a design of two carp jumping among the waves (cat. 50) reveals an element of parody. The water jar, true to mature Edo style, has several levels of meaning: its use in the tea ceremony is typically Japanese, with an intentional visual pun on the water contained within the vessel and that represented on the outside. While the deep green glaze evokes water, it is also a direct reference to a style of southern Chinese ceramics produced in the late sixteenth century, called Kōchi ware in Japan. The exotic allusion to China is amplified in the motif, which was common on Kōchi ware. Another play of *kazari* involves the medium. The vessel is stoneware, but the fish are executed in a Japanese *makie* lacquer technique, which would echo the lacquer lid that covered the



cat. 50
Eiraku Hozen,
Water jar with carp and waves
design (two views),
early eighteenth century,
stoneware with colored glaze,
lacquer, and gold foil,
15.7 (6 1/8) high,
Agency for Cultural Affairs,
Tokyo

mouth of the jar. In sum, the form, function, and medium of this piece all combine with the style of ornament to create a strong example of Edo design. In addition, the realistic depiction of the two fish reflects new developments in Edo aesthetics at the time.

Edo style is fully developed by the Genroku era (1688–1704), and ceramic wares like Utsutsugawa exhibit the hallmark integration of shape and pattern. One Utsutsugawa dish (cat. 34) has the shape and color of a melon, with a smaller melon and a melon vine depicted on the inside surface. The shape of the dish is somewhat abstract, whereas the painted decoration is more naturalistic. It is in the tension between these two renderings, one contained within the other, one sculptural and the other pictorial, that the piece becomes a successful expression of mature Edo kazari.

Arguably the most refined manifestation of Edo ornament is seen in Nabeshima porcelain, produced after the 1670s at the official Ōkawachi kiln. This porcelain was the exclusive purvey of the Nabeshima daimyo, their friends, and retainers, although it was also produced for presentation gifts to the Tokugawa. It was not sold on the open market in the Edo period but was made in limited number, with specific patterns, and in standardized shapes.

Six patterns are represented in this book, all demonstrating classical Nabeshima taste. Two general tendencies can be discerned. One is to take naturalistic motifs and flatten them into two-dimensional patterns that often belie the inherent qualities of the original subject. The other is to animate everyday objects with a life force of their own. Both approaches make use of culturally loaded symbolism and play with ground and motif patterning.

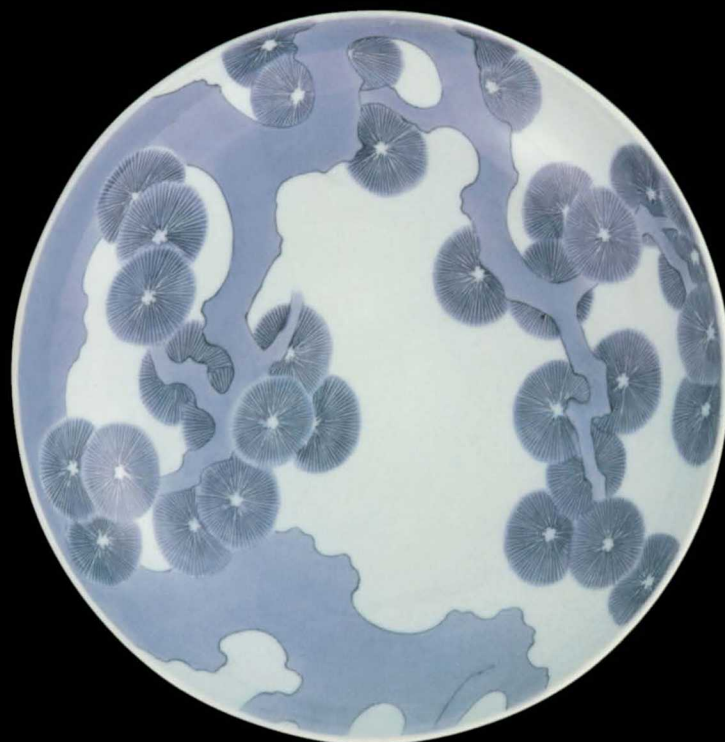
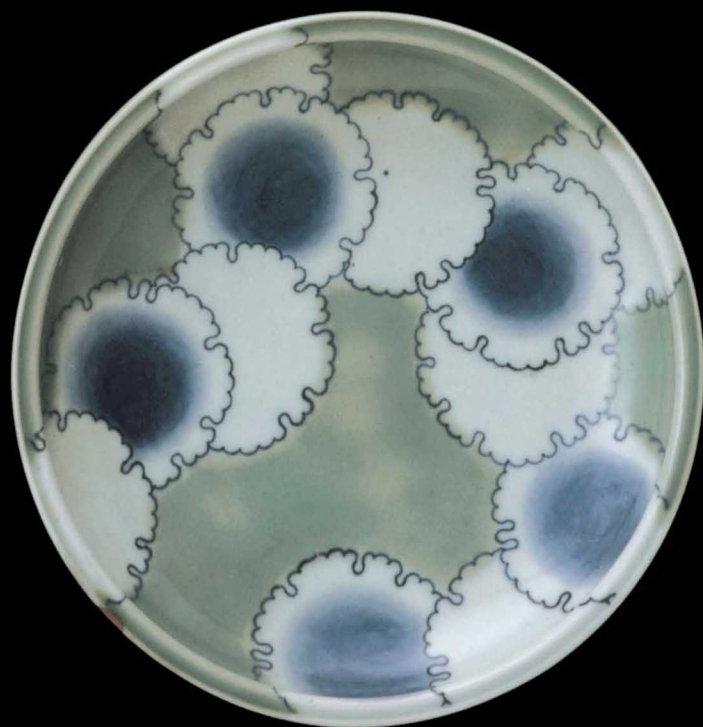
In one dish with a pine tree design and in five dishes with a cherry tree design (cats. 22, 23) the natural motifs have been transformed. Both subjects have potent symbolic meaning. The pine represented the samurai, the old Confucian scholar, winter, and strength. The cherry blossom was a symbol of spring, renewal, and death, as well as a perennial symbol of Japan itself. But with these two examples, both the pine and the cherry have forfeited their treelike qualities of strength and verticality.

cat. 18
Dish with radish and waves design,
c. 1680–1690s,
Nabeshima ware porcelain,
20.4 (8 1/8) in diameter,
Imaemon Museum of Ceramic
Antiques, Saga

cat. 19
Dish with falling snowflakes design,
c. 1690s, Nabeshima ware
porcelain, 20.2 (8) in diameter,
Imaemon Museum of
Ceramic Antiques, Saga

cat. 20
Dish with tassel design,
c. 1680s,
Nabeshima ware porcelain,
20.2 (8) in diameter,
Suntory Museum of Art, Tokyo

cat. 22
Footed bowl with pine tree design,
c. 1690–1720s,
Nabeshima ware porcelain,
29.6 (11 5/8) in diameter,
Suntory Museum of Art, Tokyo



They are wrapped around the dishes in a successful play of negative and positive space, leaving an empty center. The innate strength of the symbolism has been subsumed within the design.

On three other Nabeshima dishes a radish, snowflakes, and tassels take on a life their own. A single radish swirls around the molded rim of one dish to make a sweeping circle (cat. 18). In fact, the radish may be seen to suggest the human form, with two roots for legs and leaves for hair. The background is an abstracted wave pattern, which appears to project in front of the radish, depicted in negative, with a clean white porcelain body. Snowflakes fall over another Nabeshima dish (cat. 19), without reference to gravity or the uniqueness of natural forms. The snowflakes appear as identically shaped flowers, lighter in weight than the green celadon ground that surrounds them, freezing them in place. Perhaps the most powerfully ornamented Nabeshima dish has a design of four tassels (cat. 20). A tassel, made of silk thread attached to a cord, would have been a common sight in a daimyo household. Silken cords were used to tie up documents, bind together objects, close lacquer boxes, and so on. The tassel, however, was always subsidiary to the object onto which it was attached. On this dish tassels are freed from such restraint, even from being tied. Their animation brings two of them, one orange and one blue, toward the center of the dish, breaking the expanse of white and adding to the feeling of the cords' independence of spirit. The Nabeshima example of tassels in a circular motif shows Edo style at its most exuberant.

Animating ordinary objects was a practice in Japanese design as far back as the first century before Christ, with agricultural implements depicted individually on bronze bells. These representations are thought to have been prayers to the spirits for a plentiful harvest. The practice continued throughout Japanese history and became pronounced in the early Edo period. A samurai saddle, for instance, decorated with floating women's cosmetic brushes (cat. 54), contrasts hard (saddle) and soft (brushes), military arts and applied beauty, to give the object and the decoration new meaning.

One object depicted in all media during the Edo period, including Nabeshima porcelains, was the illustrated book. Printing and literacy transformed the Edo world, and designers must have taken particular delight in animating books and handscrolls and placing them on porcelains, robes (*kosode*) (fig. 3), and screens. The books become more than just static objects. Kazari as a life force animates the objects and at the same time reduces them to a pattern of space and textures against a flat gold ground. Such is the strength of Japanese design.

Okakura Kakuzō recorded in his book *Ideals of the East*, written in 1904 to introduce America and Europe to concepts of Asian art, particularly Japanese: "Any history of Japanese art ideals is, then, almost an impossibility, as long as the Western world remains so unaware of the varied environment and interrelated social phenomena into which that art is set, as if it were a jewel. Definition is limitation."²² It is hoped that this discussion of *kazari* has revealed that there is more to Japanese ornament than, quite literally, meets the eye. Through an understanding of the way that these objects would have been perceived, and the feelings they might have evoked, one can begin to appreciate the richness of the material culture of the Edo period and the complexities of Edo style.



fig. 3
Robe design published in an
early textile pattern book

- I would like to acknowledge help from my research assistant, Atsuko Kikuchi, and from Richard Hodges.
- 1 Owen Jones was a theorist and designer who created the Grammar of Ornament series, which attempted to collect and illustrate ornament patterns from all over the world.
- 2 David Brett, *On Decoration* (Cambridge, 1992), 36.
- 3 Quoted in Brett 1992, 44.
- 4 Yamanashi Emiko, *Nihon no bijutsu* 6, no. 349 (Tokyo, 1995), 40.
- 5 The Tokugawa government sent a small display to the Paris Exposition Universelle in 1867.
- 6 Section 137. Translation from Donald Keene, “Japanese Aesthetics,” in *Japanese Aesthetics and Culture: A Reader*, ed. Nancy Hume (Albany, N.Y., 1995), 30–31.
- 7 Tsuji Nobuo has written numerous publications on the subject, including *Nihon no bi* “kazari no sekai” ten (Tokyo, 1988); *Nihon o kazaru* (Tokyo, 1991); “The Concept of the Decorative in Japanese Art” (in English and Japanese), in *Japan and Europe in Art History* (Tokyo, 1995), 557–574; “Ornament (kazari) — An Approach to Japanese Culture,” *Archives of Asian Art* (1994), 35–45.
- 8 Quoted in Tsuji 1994, 35.
- 9 Translation from Edward Kamens, “The Past in the Present: Fujiwara Teika and the Traditions of Japanese Poetry,” in *Word in Flower: The Visualization of Classical Literature in Seventeenth-Century Japan*, ed. Carolyn Wheelwright (New Haven, 1989), 30.
- 10 Carolyn Wheelwright, “A Visualization of Eitoku’s Lost Paintings at Azuchi Castle,” in *Warlords, Artists, and Commoners: Japan in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. George Elison and Bardwell Smith (Honolulu, 1981), 87–112.
- 11 An example of the sumptuary laws can be seen in the following list of prohibitions for the merchant class (chōnin) of Edo, made in 1649:
1. Servants of chōnin should not wear silk.
2. Chōnin should not wear wool capes.
3. Entertainment by chōnin should not be elaborate.
4. Chōnin should not have household articles with gold lacquer decorations.
5. Chōnin should not use gold and silver leaf in their building.
6. Three-story houses should not be built.
7. Chōnin should not have gold lacquer on their riding saddles or braided-thread cruppers.
8. Saddle cushions should not be made of materials other than pongee, cotton, and wool blankets.
9. Weddings of chōnin should not be elaborate.
10. Chōnin should not wear long swords or large short swords.
11. Chōnin should not dress in an outlandish fashion.
- Donald H. Shively, “Sumptuary Regulation and Status in Early Tokugawa Japan,” *Harvard Journal Of Asiatic Studies* 23 (1965), 129. Shively also writes (pp. 125–126): “Saikaku says that the type and quality of clothes to be worn are dictated by the necessities of status or profession, whether samurai, merchant, or prostitute. If there is a logic to distinctions in function, distinctions must also be maintained in appearance. Exceeding one’s status did not offend heaven as much as it did the Tokugawa government.”
- 12 Hayashi Razan, Razan sensei bunshū 23 (1918), 1.253b–1254b, quoted in Shively 1965, 139.
- 13 Kōno Motoaki, “Nikkō Tōshōgū to Kanō Sanraku,” *Nikkō Tōshōgū no sōshoku monyō, jinbutsu, dōbutsu, ega* (Tokyo, 1994), 122–130.
- 14 Takafuji Harutoshi, “Nikkō Tōshōgū no horishi ni tsuite,” *Nikkō Tōshōgū no sōshoku monyō, shokubutsu, chōrui* (Tokyo, 1994), 114–140.
- 15 Takafuji 1994, 121–122, 133–134.
- 16 Takafuji 1994, 121, 133. Takafuji notes that a list of all design patterns was published in 1991 entitled *Shiryōhen, Tōshōgū no horishi* (edited by the Tōshōgū bunko).
- 17 Kobayashi Tadashi, “Kinsei shoki yūroku fūzokuga no hen-shitsu,” in *Nihon byōbue shūsei* 14, ed. Kobayashi Tadashi (Tokyo, 1979), 122–129.
- 18 This idea was first proposed by Kuroda Taizō of the Idemitsu Museum of Arts, Tokyo.
- 19 See, for example, the special issue of the ceramic magazine *Tōsetsu*, no. 414 (September 1987), and *Tōyō tōji* 21–22 (1990–1993), 5–134.
- 20 Arakawa Masa’aki, “Kokutani yōshiki no sōshoku ishō no tokushitsu ni tsuite,” *Museum* [Tokyo], no. 485 (August 1991), 19–36.
- 21 Nagasaki Iwao, “Designs for a Thousand Ages: Printed Pattern Books and Kosode,” in *When Art Became Fashion: Kosode in Edo-Period Japan*, ed. Dale Carolyn Gluckman and Sharon Sadako Takeda (Los Angeles, 1992), 103.
- 22 Okakura Kakuzō, *Ideals of the East* (Rutland, Vt., 1970), 10.

Ornament: Catalogue 1 – 50



1
Nonomura Ninsei (d. 1695)
Tea bowl with crescent moon and waves design

c. 1656
Stoneware with polychrome
overglaze enamels
Diameter 12.5 (4 7/8)
Tokyo National Museum

• Nonomura Ninsei was one of the most important potters of the Edo period and is credited with helping form the distinctive overglaze enamel stoneware made in Kyoto. He was the first potter in Japan to “sign” his wares, introducing the concept of the artist-potter into Japanese ceramics. By stamping his works with his name, consistently at the left middle part of the base where a painting would have been marked, he was making a conscious statement about his artistic identity and declaring ceramics to be the equal of painting. The hallmark of Ninsei’s design was its reliance on traditional Japanese motifs (*Yamatoe*). The waves breaking against the crescent moon depicted on this tea bowl are a superlative illustration of this style of painting.

The tea bowl was made on the potter’s wheel and finished by hand. Somewhat unusually for Ninsei, the rim, which is quite thin, has a purposeful dent directly over the moon, possibly to make it easier to drink from the bowl. The moon was painted in underglaze iron oxide, the waves in overglaze blue and green enamel. The piece was then partly covered in a thin clear glaze, leaving the footring bare. Three fingers and a thumb mark, presumably from Ninsei’s hand, are still clearly visible in the glaze.

Most of Ninsei’s production centered on vessels for the tea ceremony, including tea caddies, tea bowls, and water jars. Because of the refinement of his pieces, exemplifying the prevailing mood of restrained elegance (*kirei sabi*), they were popular among the tea elite of the period. NCR

2
Nonomura Ninsei (d. 1695)
Tea leaf jar with young pines, camellia, and mountain design

c. 1658
Stoneware with polychrome
overglaze enamels
Height 26.3 (10 3/8)
Agency for Cultural Affairs, Tokyo
Important Cultural Property

• The form of this thin-walled jar for storing tea leaves (*chatsubo*) is an enlarged version of a lacquer tea caddy (*chaire*). It is one of the smaller examples that Ninsei produced and perhaps his most refined. The shoulders are square with four ears placed on top for use in securing the lid.

This vessel demonstrates Ninsei’s strength not only with form but with overglaze enamel design. He developed a special type of “Ninsei black” enamel, over and around which he applied other brightly colored enamels in a painterly fashion. In this night scene the hills and ground have been sprinkled with gold leaf, another technique pioneered by Ninsei, though it was similar to that used both on the popular golden screens and on *makie* lacquer objects. Young pines with silver pinecones and clusters of camellias spring from among the hills and the black enamel clouds.

The form and its decoration can be seen as a play on the vessel’s function. Such jars were used to store the whole tea leaf until it was ready to be freshly ground into powder for use in the tea ceremony. Ground tea would then be transferred to a small, preferably black, lacquer tea caddy. The imitation of the tea caddy form in a tea leaf jar would have been instantly recognized by tea enthusiasts. The early spring decoration on this jar may indicate that its contents were the first tea leaves of the new year. NCR





3
Nonomura Ninsei (d. 1695)
Water jar with peony design

c. 1680s – 1695
Stoneware with polychrome
overglaze enamel
Height 14 (5 1/2)
Tokyo National Museum
Important Cultural Property

- This water jar (*mizusashi*) is an excellent example of the finely potted stoneware body and painterly approach to decoration that Ninsei achieved in his most masterful works. The painted overglaze enamel design covers almost the entire exterior of the piece and is divided into four panels, each with three peonies executed in gold, red, and silver against a white slip ground. The gold flowers are outlined in red enamel, the red flowers in gold, and the silver flowers in red. The leaves and stems are freely painted in green enamel, while the clouds and

ground are stippled with gold in a makie lacquer technique. A lozenge pattern fills the space around the panels, each division bearing a stylized gold flower against a red ground and outlined in green and silver. Ninsei consciously played with color values here and paid meticulous attention to detail.

A document of 1682, “Yōshōfushi” by Kurokawa Michitsuke, refers to the participation of Kano Tan’yū and Kano Yasunobu as well as regional Kyoto painters in Ninsei’s work, and the decoration around the mouth of the vessel is another example of Ninsei’s close ties with painting. Silver waves, which appear to be moving outward, away from the rim, are also a play on the function of the jar as a container of fresh water during the tea ceremony.

The interior of the jar is covered with a clear glaze, which reveals the original buff color of the clay body. The base is stamped with a Ninsei seal at the middle left in his standard manner and aligned with the painted panels on the exterior. NCR

4
Kosode with plants, clouds, and geometric designs on horizontal bands

Seventeenth century
Tie-dyeing, metallic leaf, and
silk embroidery on parti-colored
figured silk satin
139.5 x 125 (54 7/8 x 49 1/4)
Kyoto National Museum
Important Cultural Property

- *Kosode*, literally “small sleeves,” the precursor of the modern kimono, was the principal outer garment of both men and women of all classes during the Edo period. This early Edo-period kosode, composed of figured silk satin (*rinzu*), has been divided into horizontal bands of black, red, and white by a stitch-resist tie-dyeing technique (*nuishime shibori*). The bands have interlocking diamond-shaped profiles that derive from an abstract representation of pine trees called “pine bark lozenges” (*matsukawabishi*). Pine trees themselves are symbols of longevity. Confined within the boundaries of the bands are small-scale tie-dyed, embroidered, and gold-leafed patterns. These applied motifs include clouds, stylized mist, weeping cherry tree branches, and concentric lozenges. The dark color palette and combination of techniques used on this robe are characteristic of kosode thought to have been worn by women of the military elite from the Keichō (1596 – 1614) through Kan’ei (1624 – 1644) eras. SST





5

Kosode fragments with fans, leaves, plants, and abstract shapes mounted on screen

Second quarter of seventeenth century

Tie-dyeing, silk and metallic thread embroidery, metallic leaf, and pigment on parti-colored figured silk satin

171 x 190 (67³/₈ x 74³/₄)

National Museum of Japanese History, Chiba, Nomura Collection

- Monochrome figured silk satin (rinzu) was introduced to Japan from China at the end of the sixteenth century. By 1615 this type of satin was woven in the Nishijin district of Kyoto and used extensively for kosode production. This lustrous, textured fabric is considered to have encouraged the development of the Keichō-Kan'ei style.

The ground of the kosode fragments attached to this screen is divided into color zones of interlocking abstract and recognizable shapes defined by stitch-resist tie-dyeing (nuishime shibori) in black, red, and white. Small areas, especially on the fan motifs, have minute tie-dyeing (*kanoko shibori*), while the black sections are covered with fine overall patterns of gold leaf (*surihaku*). On the red background bamboo and bamboo shoots, mandarin orange trees, and floral medallions are embroidered in silk and delicately outlined with gold metallic thread. Even smaller motifs of a mallet, treasure bag, sedge hat, pine, and mandarin orange trees are hand-painted with pigments on the white areas. These applied decorative motifs bear equal weight with the parti-colored ground, characterizing this as a design “without ground” (*jinashi*).

The sweeping curve of forms that extends from the upper-left sleeve to lower-right hem anticipates the compositional layout of Kanbun-era kosode (1661–1673). Beginning then, kosode were designed with broader unembellished backgrounds, and patterns of metallic foil were replaced by more abundant use of couched metallic thread embroidery. SST



6

Writing box with imperial cart design

Seventeenth century

Lacquer on wood with makie

3.9 x 22.4 x 20.9 (1¹/₂ x 8⁷/₈ x 8¹/₄)

Tokyo National Museum

Important Cultural Property

Illustrated page 30

- This writing box (*suzuribako*) has chamfered edges and corners and is decorated in *takamakie*, one of three main lacquer techniques used in the Edo period. The process involved building up selected surfaces through a mixture of lacquer and charcoal or clay dust, then sprinkling various metals, including gold and silver, from a bamboo tube while the lacquer was still wet.

The design on the lid of this box depicts a fine carriage in a landscape surrounded by flowing waters. Chrysanthemums in the foreground and middle distance complement the stylized chrysanthemum pattern on the carriage roof. The carriage interior is decorated with a beautiful landscape scene.

Ox-drawn carriages were used by the nobility during the Heian period (794–1185), and the type of conveyance revealed one's status at court. The carriage depicted here, a symbol for Prince Genji's world in *Tale of Genji*, is called a Genji cart. The chrysanthemum motif conformed to seventeenth-century tastes at the imperial court in Kyoto. NCR



7

Writing box with autumn flowers and grasses

Seventeenth century

Lacquer on wood with makie

4.6 x 24.5 x 22.5 (1³/₄ x 9⁵/₈ x 8⁷/₈)

Ishikawa Prefectural Museum of Art

- This writing box is a remarkable example of the detail that can be achieved with the high-relief *takamakie* lacquer technique. The top is decorated with a design of autumn flowers and grasses, a popular motif associated with a poem from the eighth-century compilation *Man'yōshū* (8:1537–8): “Flowers blossoming on autumn fields, when I count them on my fingers, they number seven. The flowers of bush clover, pampas grass, and arrowroot; pink, patrinia, then mistflower and morning glory” (translated by Okada 1995, 68). The interior scene depicts flying cranes, some with pine sprigs clasped in their beaks — a motif often associated with winter.

The Maeda family of the Kaga domain (currently Ishikawa Prefecture) was an important daimyo clan, known particularly for its patronage of the arts. The third-generation daimyo, Toshitsune, invited the artist Igarashi Dōhō to create what is now called *Kagamakie*-style lacquer. The box seen here is thought to have been made by Dōhō. NCR

8
Large sake ewer with Chinese lions and peony design

c. 1640s
Hizen ware, Kokutani style
Porcelain with underglaze cobalt blue and overglaze polychrome enamels
Height 19.4 (7⁵/₈)
Agency for Cultural Affairs, Tokyo
Important Cultural Property

Illustrated page 59

• “Hizen ware” is the term used in this book for porcelains made at kilns in the Arita area, Hizen province. The style designation, in this case “Kokutani” (Old Kutani), refers to the type of decoration employed on the porcelain.

This sake ewer (*chōshi*) is a particularly fine example of early Kokutani style, both in form and in decoration. Its form is derived from metal prototypes. Its allover decoration is a painterly rendition of three Chinese lions and four blossoming peonies that displays careful attention to detail, especially around the spout and the handle.

The body of the ewer is decorated in red, green, blue, and yellow overglaze enamels, in the dark, rich hues typical of Kokutani-style production. The handle, however, is painted only in underglaze cobalt blue. Perhaps this was because it was understood that overglaze enamels wear, and a hardy underglaze decoration was most appropriate for the handle, which would receive the most use.

Kokutani-style porcelains have continued to attract attention from their first appearance until the present day. Sherds of this ware have been excavated from various daimyo households in Edo, confirming that it was owned and used by the military elite of the time.

It can be assumed that this piece was produced at the Maruo kiln in Arita, as sherds with an identical knob lid have been excavated there. NCR

9
Dish with lotus leaf and geometric pattern

Late 1640s
Hizen ware, Kokutani style
Porcelain with underglaze cobalt blue and polychrome overglaze enamels
Diameter 33 (13)
Idemitsu Museum of Arts, Tokyo

Illustrated page 57

• This is an excellent example of the strength of Kokutani-style design. Though materials were often rough, firing methods irregular, and the application of enamels careless, the designs influenced the production of later Hizen ware throughout the Edo period. For example, a Nabeshima bowl with heron and lotus design (cat. 21) imitates the way this Kokutani-style dish depicts a partial lotus leaf. There is a noticeable difference in the quality of execution, however. The flowing outline of the refined Nabeshima-ware leaf is drawn and filled in with great care, whereas the Kokutani-style leaf is partly flopped over, its veins more naturalistically defined. Even with the technical imperfections, this dish conveys a sense of life absent in the later example.

The vitality of this dish derives in part from the spatial illusion created by the motif and ground. Most of the interior is covered with a diamond-shaped pattern. Six concentric diamonds make up each unit, with alternating geometric and blank bands visible. Twelve different geometric patterns are employed, in both positive and negative forms. Covering the bottom third of the dish, a large three-dimensional lotus leaf is outlined in cobalt blue and filled in with green enamel. The leaf appears to be placed in front of a flat geometric surface, creating an intriguing optical illusion.

The exterior of the dish is encircled with a stylized peony scroll, and an abstracted square good luck seal (*fuku*) lies inside the footring, both of which are painted in underglaze cobalt blue. NCR

10
Large shallow bowl with chrysanthemum design

c. 1650s – 1660s
Hizen ware, aode Kokutani style
Porcelain with polychrome overglaze enamels
Diameter 47.5 (18³/₄)
Idemitsu Museum of Arts, Tokyo

Illustrated page 61

• *Aode* (blue green) ware is one of the most experimental and visually compelling of all Japanese porcelain styles, its saturated colors nearly obscuring the motifs. This exceptionally large shallow bowl is completely covered with enamels of green, yellow, and purple (derived from manganese), while the outlines are drawn in brownish black. The bowl is distinguished from most Kokutani-style ware by the brightness of the enamels. The bold composition is made up of Japanese elements: chrysanthemums, stylized flowers, and a stylized water pattern.

It has been suggested that the aode style is an allusion to screen painting, the yellow enamel referring to gold leaf, and the green to malachite pigment. A pattern similar to the stylized flowers in the background of this piece is occasionally embossed (*moriage*) on the gold cloud bands that appear on many Kano screens.

The main motif on this bowl, seven chrysanthemum flowers and three buds, is echoed in the stylized background. A band of green flowing water encircles the interior of the rim. A similar chrysanthemum design can be found in the textile pattern books that became popular as a design source for all craft media beginning in the Kanbun era.

In a reflection of the design on the interior of the bowl, the exterior sports a chrysanthemum scroll in iron oxide against a yellow enamel ground. In the center of the footring, again in iron oxide, is a stylized good luck mark (*fuku*). NCR



11
Dish with ivy design
c. 1650s
Hizen ware, aode Kokutani style
Porcelain with polychrome
overglaze enamels
Diameter 25.3 (10)
The Kyushu Ceramic Museum, Saga

• This high-footed aode dish is similar in decoration to the preceding bowl (cat. 10). The central motif is a sprig of ivy with two blue and three green leaves. The knurled brown stem gracefully covers the central area, creating

a pleasing balance between the negative and positive space. The play with space continues, as the ivy leaves are carefully layered against one another. One green leaf is even partly tucked behind the stem. The background consists of a stylized floral pattern in yellow and iron oxide. On the interior rim a stylized water pattern is painted in deep green and articulated with iron oxide. The rim itself is molded into the shape of twelve petals (the standard number for later Ming blue-and-white dishes).

The exterior of this piece is decorated with a large scrolling vine pattern in iron oxide and yellow enamel. The outside of the footring has a stylized lotus leaf pattern that appears again later on certain Nabeshima footrings. The interior of the footring is covered with green enamel, and a large stylized mark in iron oxide that indicates “happiness descending from heaven” (*roku*) is placed in the center.

High-footed vessels with similar coloring have been excavated from the Yanbeta kiln number 4, making it possible that this dish was fired there. NCR

12
Large dish with birds, tree, and waves design

c. 1650s
Hizen ware, aode Kokutani style
Porcelain with polychrome overglaze enamels
Diameter 34.9 (13 3/4)
The Kyushu Ceramic Museum, Saga

Illustrated page 61

• This beautiful dish exemplifies the second stage of Kokutani-style production. The tree and birds have a painterly quality reminiscent of Kano-school screens. For emphasis, sections of the branches and the birds’ eyes have been left white, but everything else is covered with deeply hued overglaze enamels. Yellow, green, and blue enamels are outlined with iron oxide.

The two birds seem to be perched in a tree overlooking the water. They are placed at the center of the dish, facing each other as if courting. Together with the green leaves of the tree and the blue hydrangea flower at the top of the dish, they counterbalance the rolling yellow waves that cover the entire left half of the composition and slant upward at the left edge in an additional show of movement. While the application of enamel is a bit rough, the iron oxide line drawing of the tree and the birds is exceptionally well executed. It is possible that a professional painter helped to draw the design or that the pattern was carefully copied from a printed book.

The exterior of the dish has an abbreviated scrolling vine design. The interior of the footring is left white, covered only with a clear glaze, except for an unrecognizable symbol in the middle painted in black and green enamels. This symbol as well as the white areas mark this dish as an early aode piece, probably created in the first half of the 1650s. NCR

13
Katabira with box, abstract snowflake roundels, fans, and flowering plants

1661 – 1673
Tie-dyeing, stenciled imitation tie-dyeing, and silk and gold metallic thread embroidery on plain-weave ramie
131 x 115.2 (51 5/8 x 45 3/8)
Tokyo National Museum

• Katabira are unlined summer kosode. Originally fabricated of silk in the Kamakura period (1185 – 1333), katabira of the latter part of the Muromachi period (1392 – 1573) were made only of ramie (*chōma*), a bast fiber of the nettle family. Ramie cloth absorbs moisture and dries quickly, making it an ideal choice for garments worn during Japan’s hot, humid summers.

The number of extant dark-back-ground katabira from the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries suggests that they were once very fashionable. While the dark color of this katabira of plain-weave ramie does not immediately suggest summer wear, the motifs help to create a cool feeling by association with the cold weather of autumn (chrysanthemum and bush clover) and winter (abstract snowflake roundels). In addition, two folding fans on the lower half of the garment hint at the comfort of a cool breeze.

Unlike motifs on earlier kosode, those here are enlarged and freed from the confines of color-defined areas, floating instead on a vast background. Located predominately on the right side and arranged in a dynamic asymmetrical composition typical of the Kanbun era, tie-dyed (*kanoko shibori*), stenciled imitation tie-dyed (*kata kanoko*), and embroidered (*shishū*) motifs form a whole design unit. Derived from both nature and everyday life, the bold, easy-to-read objects express the vibrant taste of the newly prosperous townsman class (*chōnin*). SST

14
Kosode with scattered flutes

Late seventeenth century
Tie-dyeing and ink on figured silk satin
139 x 128 (54 3/4 x 50 3/8)
National Museum of Japanese History, Chiba, Nomura Collection

• The flutes depicted on this kosode appear to be a type of *shakuhachi* known as the *hitoyogiri*, which emerged during the Muromachi period. Played by wandering priests, these short, end-blown bamboo flutes, with four finger holes on top and one on the underside, produced a high, sweet sound.

Delineated by tie-dyed techniques (*kanoko* and *nuishime shibori*) and ink drawing (*kakie*) on a ground of figured silk satin, the flutes appear to be randomly scattered over the surface. Closer examination, however, reveals the underlying format characteristic of kosode from the Kanbun era. Starting with the upper-left shoulder area, the flutes appear to tumble down toward the right and then toward the lower left. Such scattered yet well-balanced designs of man-made objects were popular with the townsman class, particularly during the middle Edo period. SST



13



14

15
Dish with spider's web design

c. 1673 – 1681
Hizen ware, Koimari style
Porcelain with underglaze cobalt blue
Diameter 21.1 (8¹/₄)
The Kyushu Ceramic Museum, Saga

Illustrated page 63

• The high point of the Japanese porcelain industry was clearly the 1670s, when innovative designs like this one were created for the domestic market (and Kakiemon-style wares were produced for export). The spider's web design on this dish was popular in textile pattern books during the Kanbun era and on sword guards in the later eighteenth century. It follows a Chinese prototype, which assigns auspicious meaning to the spider's web (the Chinese term for "spider's web" is a homonym for "joy descending from heaven").

This dish was formed in a mold, and the sections of the spider's web have been painted to align with the octagonal shape of the dish. Sixteen sections are defined by thin dark cobalt blue lines radiating from the center of the dish. Irregular segments of each section, blocked off with bars of cobalt blue, are left white toward the center of the dish and filled in with an even light cobalt blue wash toward the rim. Two sections of the rim are left white, however, to accent the asymmetry of the design and enhance the play of negative and positive space.

The spider's web pattern extends in some places onto the exterior of the piece, which is covered entirely with a light cobalt blue wash. The interior of the footring has a four-character mark reading "Enpō nensei" (made in the Enpō era [1673 – 1681]), one of the earliest examples of written Japanese reign dates on porcelains. In addition to the reign date, six spur marks created by the firing tools are still visible inside the footring. NCR



16
Celadon bowl with linked circle, snowflake, and geometric design

c. 1690 – 1700
Hizen ware, Koimari style
Porcelain with green glaze, underglaze cobalt blue, and polychrome overglaze enamels
Diameter 21.3 (8³/₈)
The Kyushu Ceramic Museum, Saga

• This celadon bowl is classified as Kinrande (brocade) Koimari in style, its distinctive design executed in rich underglaze and overglaze colors. It was produced during the Genroku era (1688 – 1704) and expresses the exuberance of design that was current at the time.

The bowl is actually a transitional piece. The Koimari-style features, which became dominant beginning in the 1700s, include the color palette and the painted design. But the Kakiemon-style features, popular in the 1660s – 1690s, include the creamy white body with minimal use of underglaze cobalt blue, the application of bright overglaze polychrome

enamels in a painterly fashion, and the shape of the bowl. The reticulated linked circles around the rim are from a Kakiemon-style mold, an example of which is still owned by the Sakaida Kakiemon family in Arita (see Nabe-shima 1957, fig. 5).

The red and gold enamel combination is reminiscent of brocade porcelains of the Chinese Jiajing era (1522 – 1566), exported to Japan in large numbers. The classic Chinese design included symmetrically placed roundels filled with geometric patterns, usually on a red ground. Chinese design elements in this bowl have been adapted to a Japanese aesthetic: the roundels have become squares that are placed asymmetrically, and five large snowflakes have been introduced into the empty spaces, creating a familiar tension between motif and ground. Here the circular painted snowflakes, some overlapping each other, echo the linked rings around the rim of the bowl. NCR



17

*Celadon dish with butterfly,
peony, and iris design*

c. 1690–1710

Hizen ware, Koimari style

Porcelain with underglaze cobalt blue
and polychrome overglaze enamels

Diameter 22.1 (8⁵/₈)

The Kyushu Ceramic Museum,
Saga, Shibata Collection

• This dish captures the spirit of the Genroku era in its brightly colored close-up view of a floral arrangement, alive with movement and spatial play. The absence of a border around the rim, which had been typical in earlier pieces, serves only to accentuate the freedom of the design.

A checked surface — possibly a wall, a table, or a floor — is composed of alternating stylized flowers and geometric patterns. In the foreground red and gold peonies and iris grow out of a Chinese ornamental rock, filling the center of the dish, while two iris plants spring up in the background. One butterfly and five smaller flying insects add to the liveliness of the scene. Though many of the motifs are of Chinese origin, they had been part of the Japanese design vocabulary since at least the middle ages. The

peony and butterfly, for example, appeared in the Shōsōin, the repository for Emperor Shōmu's belongings dating to 756.

The exterior of the dish is banded with a stylized floral scroll, based on Chinese prototypes. This decoration is particularly refined, incorporating red and green overglaze enamels along with the standard underglaze cobalt blue design. Inside the footring there is a stylized good luck character (fuku); this method of drawing the symbol began to be used on Kakiemon-style ware in the 1670s and became standard from the 1680s until the eighteenth century, particularly at the Nangawara Kamanotsuji kiln, where this dish may have been made. NCR

18
Dish with radish and waves design

c. 1680 – 1690s
Nabeshima ware
Porcelain with underglaze cobalt blue and overglaze enamels
Diameter 20.4 (8⅞)
Imaemon Museum of Ceramic Antiques, Saga

Illustrated page 65

• A good number of Nabeshima dishes display vegetable motifs, but few are as bold in design as this one. It achieves a perfect balance between the underglaze and overglaze colorants, the molded edges of the radish leaves, and the refined disappearing ink technique used to define the waves in the background.

This type of design was popular in other media at the time, notably in textiles. But the motif predates the Edo period, occurring, for example, on the thirteenth-century Kamakura handscroll *Portraits of Courtiers* (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Tokyo), where one courtier's robe is embellished with a radish design. The difference is in the method of depiction. The radish here wraps flamboyantly around the rim of the dish to form a circle.

The seven-sun size of this dish, which would have been used by daimyo during ordinary meals for serving food related to the painted design, was one of the most popular at the Nabeshima kilns. The shape here echoes the curves in the leaves of the radish. The leaves themselves are blue, green, and yellow, the last perhaps referring to an older dying section of a leaf. The exterior of the dish has a floral scroll, and a comb pattern in underglaze cobalt blue encircles the footring. As with all Nabeshima official ware, there is no character or written mark inside the footring. NCR

19
Dish with falling snowflakes design

c. 1690s
Nabeshima ware
Porcelain with celadon glaze and underglaze cobalt blue
Diameter 20.2 (8)
Imaemon Museum of Ceramic Antiques, Saga

Illustrated page 65

• This celadon and underglaze cobalt blue dish is an example of domestic Japanese taste. It also represents the standard colors used in classic Nabeshima ware. Five of the twelve snowflakes here are partly filled with a soft cobalt blue circle. The rest are left white. All have been outlined with underglaze cobalt blue. With the celadon glaze in the background, the design is a study in negative and positive values — the space where the snowflakes are not placed is of equal importance to where they are.

A similarly dated Koimari dish also makes use of the snowflake pattern (cat. 16). Indeed the motif, which was popular in Edo textiles and textile pattern books, was used at the Hizen kilns in Arita beginning in the 1650s. A line in a poem (number 22) from the classic *Anthology of Ancient and Modern Poetry* (*Kokinshū*) seems particularly apt for this dish: “to see snow as flowers descending from the sky.”

The exteriors of Nabeshima plates, standardized for the most part after the Genroku era, were decorated in underglaze cobalt blue, most of them with a cash and ribbon design (linked circles, referring to Chinese coins tied with a ribbon), and a comb design circled the outside of the footring. This piece has the comb pattern around the footring, but its floral scroll is of a type that predates the cash motif. The rim of the dish has an unusual molded ridge. NCR

20
Dish with tassel design

c. 1680s
Nabeshima ware
Porcelain with overglaze polychrome enamels
Diameter 20.2 (8)
Suntory Museum of Art, Tokyo

Illustrated page 65

• Four tassels and cords swirling around the interior rim of this dish compose the original design. The center of the dish is left white, except where two tassels, one blue and one orange red, encroach on the space. The strength of Nabeshima design lies in the ability of artisans to transform mundane objects into exciting patterns.

This dish was produced at the official Ōkawachi domain kilns, where elaborate processes were followed to protect the secret recipe for overglaze enameling. Underglaze decoration was applied after the porcelain was dried but before the main firing in a climbing kiln at approximately 1,320° centigrade. Overglaze enamels were applied after firing, at which point the piece would be refired in a separate “muffle” kiln at much lower temperatures depending on the color of the enamel. According to a document in the Taku branch of the Nabeshima family, overglaze enamel had to be controlled and fired by specialists in Arita who were licensed and overseen by the Saga domain. Thus overglaze enamels were brought from Arita to Ōkawachi, where they were applied. Then the pieces were carefully packed and transported with a guard unit back to Arita to be fired, and returned to Ōkawachi under guard after firing.

The overall shape of a Nabeshima dish, with its relatively high footring, was based on wooden and lacquer prototypes, which help to account for the exceptionally refined form that is not usually seen in Hizen ceramic repertoire. NCR



21

21

Footed bowl with heron and lotus design

1690–1720

Nabeshima ware

Porcelain with underglaze cobalt blue

Diameter 28 (11)

The Kyushu Ceramic Museum, Saga
Important Cultural Property

• This remarkably refined tripod dish is a testimony to the quality control of cobalt blue design at the official Nabeshima kiln. The shapes of the three herons are executed in a flawless fluid line, while the cobalt wash that makes up the background is perfectly even in tone. The three herons are all in different poses, one seen from the front, one from the rear, and one from the side. The last is standing on one leg and has its mouth open as if calling to other birds.

The design of a heron and lotus has a specific meaning in Chinese: *lu* means “heron,” which is a homonym for

“path”; and *lian* means “lotus,” which is a homonym for “upward.” Thus the combination means “May your path always be upward.”

The design on the exterior is of three magnolia sprays. The three glazed feet are nyoi-shaped (based on a Buddhist instruction wand), and traces of the small spurs used as firing tools can still be seen on the unglazed bull’s-eye-shaped footring (twenty marks on the outside of the footring, and fourteen on the inside). NCR

22
Footed bowl with pine tree design

c. 1690 – 1720s
Nabeshima ware
Porcelain with underglaze cobalt blue
Diameter 29.6 (11 5/8)
Suntory Museum of Art, Tokyo

Illustrated page 65

- This tripod dish is another superb example of the design abilities of the Nabeshima artisans. The pine tree appears to wrap around itself so that the gnarled base of the trunk practically touches the topmost branches. The circular design around an empty center is one of the main characteristics of mature Nabeshima design.

The pine tree was an apt symbol for the samurai, as it was considered in Chinese mythology, along with plum and bamboo, to be one of the three “gentlemen friends” of winter, staying green as it does throughout the cold months. An old pine is considered particularly auspicious.

The dish itself is shallow, with thin walls. It stands on three molded leaf-shaped legs that are covered in a cobalt blue glaze. Because of this the piece had to be fired with a special stacking tool and required an unglazed circular area around the base on which to rest, creating a bull’s-eye footring. There are spur marks along the unglazed area. The exterior has a design of three magnolia sprays. NCR

23
Set of five dishes with blossoming cherry tree design

1710 – 1720
Nabeshima ware
Porcelain with underglaze cobalt blue and polychrome enamels
Diameter 20 (7 7/8) each
Tokyo National Museum

- These five dishes constitute a set, a common occurrence in Nabeshima ware, which was usually made in sets of five, ten, or twenty. They employ the standard seven-sun size and the classic circular composition, with a blossoming cherry tree wrapped around each plate and the center free of decoration.

Blossoming cherry trees have played an important role in Japanese aesthetics from an early period. Evocative of spring, the flower petals soon fall to the ground, a reminder of the fleeting beauty of the season and even of life. The composition of a bending cherry tree is depicted and dated 1718 in the Nabeshima pattern book (*zuanchō*), handed down in the Nabeshima family. Yet designs were often repeated for decades, and caution should be exercised in assigning a date of manufacture to these dishes. The characteristic depiction of tree roots, also seen in Kano-school painting, is clearly depicted in the pattern book for blossoming plum and mandarin orange trees as well as for cherry trees.

In these dishes the cherry blossoms have all been faintly outlined in underglaze cobalt blue, then painted again in overglaze enamels. This painstaking process (Chinese: *doucai*, or “joined colors”) was developed in China during the fifteenth century. Because of the time and skill necessary, the technique was employed at the Nabeshima kilns in Ōkawachi only for special items.

The exteriors of the dishes display the classic cash and comb design: three groupings of six linked circles on the body and a comb pattern circling the exterior of the footring. NCR





24

Ogata Kenzan (1663 – 1743)

Shallow covered bowl with pine trees and waves design

c. 1704 – 1711

Stoneware with underglaze iron oxide and cobalt blue with gold enamel

Diameter 23.8 (9 ³/₈)

Idemitsu Museum of Arts, Tokyo

Important Cultural Property

• The ceramics of Ogata Kenzan are thought of as highly as are those of Nonomura Ninsei, his stylistic mentor (see cats. 1 – 3). The third son of a prosperous merchant, Kenzan, with his older brother Kōrin, who became a famous painter, had a privileged childhood. Their father's textile shop supplied clothes to the Kyoto elite of the day, including the imperial family. Their grandfather supported the artistic colony established by Hon'ami Kōetsu (1558 – 1637) at Takagamine, where Kenzan spent considerable time as a child studying ceramics with Kōetsu's grandson Kōho.

Kenzan founded his first pottery studio, the “Hall of Quiet Learning,” in 1688 in western Kyoto just outside the temple gates of Ninnaji. He studied with Ninsei's son, who, when Kenzan moved his kiln to Narutaki Izumidani, a few miles northwest of Omuro, in 1699, gave him a manual of secret technical information compiled by Ninsei. It was in Narutaki that Kenzan's style began to be formed under the influence of his brother Kōrin. Many of the pieces he fired there were collaborations between the two, often signed and sealed by both (see cats. 25, 26). Their joint projects seem to have ended in 1712 when Kenzan moved to Nijō Chōjiyamachi in central Kyoto. After Kōrin's death in 1716 Kenzan moved to Edo, where he produced pottery until his death in 1743.

Kenzan wrote a book (now in the Yamato Bunkakan, Nara) that reveals his debt to Ninsei as well as his own experimentation with all aspects of ceramic manufacture. While his works do not have the technical mastery of Ninsei's, his finest pieces possess an admirable freedom of style and looseness of composition.

In the covered bowl seen here, Kenzan's innovative design sense unifies the qualities of painting and clay. With its enlarged lid, the piece could not function as a storage box and was probably

intended as a purely aesthetic object.

The overall shape is derived from lacquer writing-paper boxes.

The design is Kenzan's play on the traditional scenic spot of Hamamatsu, known for the pines on a stretch of land surrounded by water. Kenzan has separated the pines from the water. On the exterior of the box he has painted four pines in different colors — white slip, brown iron oxide, gold, and silver enamel — both on the left and on the right sides, connecting the lid with the lower section. The color of the clay creates the ground against which the pines are set. By contrast, the interior of the box — the lid as well as the bowl — is coated in a white slip, over which are painted stylized waves in gold and silver enamel. The waves are thought to have been painted by Kōrin, but without a signature it is impossible to be certain. The isolation of the waves on the inside and the pines on the outside creates a fresh interpretation of this classic theme.

Kenzan in characteristic manner has painted a large square seal in iron oxide in the middle of the base of the bowl by which the piece can be dated to the Hōei era (1704 – 1711). NCR



25



26

25

Ogata Kōrin (1658–1716) and
Ogata Kenzan (1663–1743)
Square dish with crane design

c. 1710

Stoneware and underglaze
iron oxide
Width 22.2 (8³/₄)
Fujita Museum of Art, Osaka
Important Cultural Property

• Kenzan’s ceramic style was clearly influenced by his erudite and artistic brother Kōrin. Nowhere is this clearer than in the pieces on which they worked together. This square dish is an exquisite example of their collaborative efforts.

The piece was originally part of a set of twenty dishes handed down in the Fujita family (see also cat. 26), sixteen of which were still in the family’s hands during the Meiji period (1868–1912). Ten of these dishes are currently in the Fujita Museum (another two are in the Idemitsu Museum of Arts, Tokyo), and all of them are designated Important Cultural Properties. Kenzan formed and fired the pieces at the Narutaki Izumidani kiln. He also painted the calligraphy and designed the rim decoration, while Kōrin executed the underpainting. Both brothers signed each piece, Kōrin beside the paintings, and Kenzan alongside the poems.

From the style of the paintings, the dishes can be tentatively dated about 1710.

The poem on the interior of this dish, written in Chinese, reads “Looking upward, it does not aspire to reach heaven with a single piercing cry, it wants to startle one into enlightenment” (translated by Hongxing Zhang and Roderick Whitefield). The poem is preceded by an unreadable oval seal and is signed “Kenzan Shinseigō” (“Shinsei” is an artistic name Kenzan took at age twenty-five). Underneath the signature are two stamped red seals: the upper one is depicted in negative and reads “Tōin,” whereas the lower one is depicted in positive and reads “Shōko,” but it is placed upside down. This upside-down placement is consistent on all of the dishes in the set and should be viewed as part of the design that juxtaposes negative and positive as well as opposing orientations.

Next to the poem stands a crane. The crane faces one direction but turns its head in the other, voicing a silent cry. The bird’s call echoes the poem. Framing the crane are three reeds, behind which Kōrin has signed his name in the lower left corner.

The rims of all pieces in the set have similar decoration. The interior of the rim is ornamented with a loose floral spray on each of the four sides. The exterior has a roundel filled with a stylized flower against a checked pattern that is reminiscent of a textile design. NCR

26

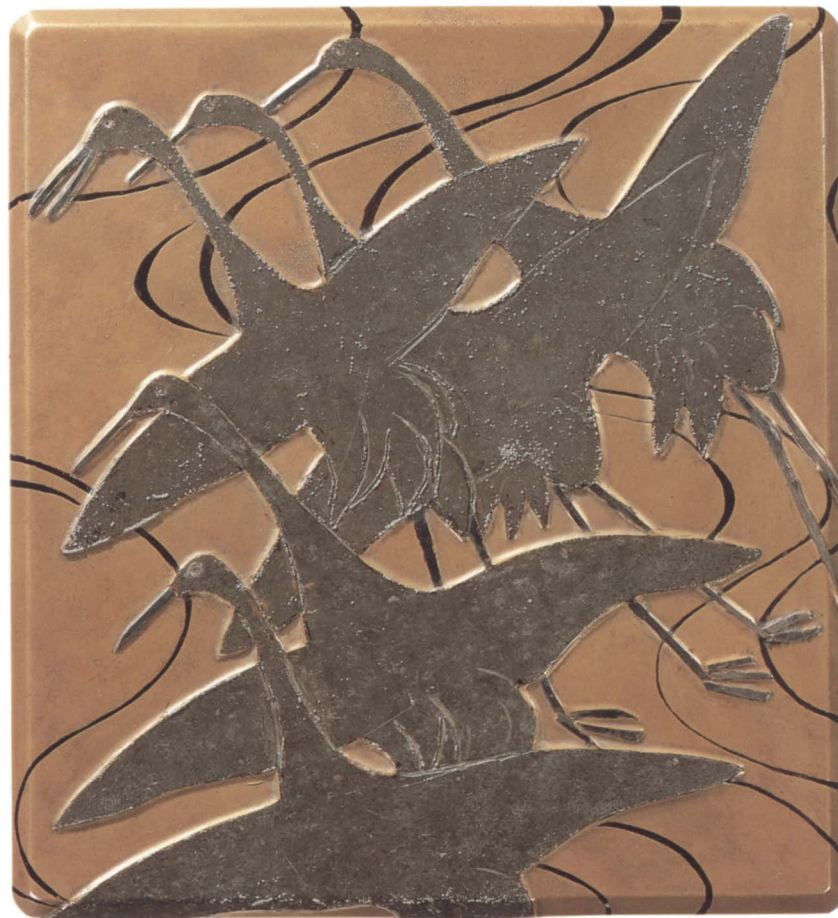
Ogata Kōrin (1658–1716) and
Ogata Kenzan (1663–1743)
Square dish with plum tree design

c. 1710

Stoneware with underglaze iron oxide
Width 22 (8⁵/₈)
Fujita Museum of Art, Osaka
Important Cultural Property

• This piece is a companion to cat. 25. The poem here reads “Its scent breaks the solitude of the hill, adding to the coldness of the snow: Standing apart on the south bank, it makes the water clearer” (translated by Hongxing Zhang and Roderick Whitefield). The poem clearly refers to the old plum tree depicted to the right, with tender branches shooting out of an old stump. The plum was a symbol of winter, blossoming near the lunar new year. Kōrin painted the plum tree and signed his work to the right “Hokkyō Kōrin,” using the honorific painting title he was awarded. Kenzan signed “Kenzan Tōinsho” next to the poem and added two stamped red seals beneath the signature as in cat. 25 and the other dishes in the set.

Other themes represented in the set include chrysanthemums, willows, bamboo, Jurōjin (the god of longevity), and a Chinese figure. NCR



27
Writing box with crane design in the
style of Ogata Kōrin

Eighteenth century
Lacquer
4.8 x 24.2 x 21.8 (1⁷/₈ x 9¹/₂ x 8¹/₂)
Tokyo National Museum

• This squarish writing box is thought to be in the style of the famous second-generation Rinpa artist Ogata Kōrin. It is impossible to link Kōrin concretely with the production of this box, and the design does not appear in posthumous compendia of his designs. But it was certainly created under Kōrin's influence at some time during the eighteenth century. The graceful yet bold depiction of cranes flying against a current has much in

common with other known lacquer designs by Kōrin, which were in turn influenced by the Rinpa artist Hon'ami Kōetsu. In particular, Kōetsu pioneered the juxtaposition of powerful metal forms applied to gold grounds on lacquer boxes.

Though only five cranes are depicted in this box, the design refers to the thousand-crane motif that originated in China and symbolized long life. The crane was supposed to live for a thousand years, and the tortoise, another symbol of longevity, for ten thousand. NCR



28

Ogata Kōrin (1658–1716)

Writing box with design illustrating poem
of courtier crossing the Sano River

Lacquer with gold, silver,
mother-of-pearl, and lead
22.4 x 20.9 (8⁷/₈ x 8¹/₄)

The Gotoh Museum, Tokyo

• This writing box, probably designed
by Kōrin toward the end of his life,
takes the classic form, with a flat-
tened top and squared edges. Simi-
larly, the motif for the cover design
comes from classical literature and
is portrayed in the native Japanese

Yamatōe style. The use of materials
and the abstraction of the individual
design elements, however, are com-
pletely fresh and reveal Kōrin's strong
sense of two-dimensional patterning.

The image of a man on horseback
shielding himself from the elements
as he starts to cross a river is a direct
reference to a poem by Fujiwara no
Teika (1162–1241): “There is no shelter
in which to rest my horse or / brush
the snow from my sleeves / at Sano
crossing on this snowy night.” The
poem alludes to a ford in the Sano
River (in current Tochigi Prefecture)
that was on an established route
for pilgrims traveling to the Kumano
shrine. Teika’s work is based on an
earlier poem in the *Man’yōshū* (book 3,
number 365). The Sano crossing is

therefore both a real and a poetic
space. Kōrin captures this feeling
with the abstraction of the water in a
play of marbled ink (*suminagashi*)
represented in metals and lacquer.

A scene based on the same poem was
painted by the school of Tawaraya
Sōtatsu (Cleveland Museum of Art).
Kōrin himself painted a similar ver-
sion on a hanging scroll in 1711 or 1712
(Museum of Art, Shizuoka). NCR

29
Ogata Kōrin (1658–1716)
Kosode with autumn flowers and grasses

Early eighteenth century
Hand-painted ink and color
on silk twill
147.2 x 130.2 (58 x 51 1/4)
Tokyo National Museum
Important Cultural Property

Illustrated page 54

• Artists known for their paintings on screens and scrolls sometimes devoted their talents to decorating kosode. One of the more celebrated artists to turn his attention to these garments was Ogata Kōrin, who was equally skilled at calligraphy, painting, and the applied arts. It is believed that he was commissioned to paint this kosode at the height of his career, when he was staying with the Fuyuki family, prosperous timber merchants from the Fukagawa area of Edo. This unique piece is evidence of the degree of wealth reached by the merchant class during the Edo period. Subtle and refined compared to other examples of the time, this robe, with its fragile painted decoration, is the essence of quiet elegance (*iki*).

Kōrin’s delicate brushstrokes portray lifelike chrysanthemums, bush clover, Japanese pampas grass, and Chinese bellflowers. Though the plants are arranged in a seemingly carefree manner, they are beautifully balanced with the form of the garment. It seems that Kōrin painted the robe after it was sewn together, unlike typical dyed and embroidered kosode. It is difficult to know whether the less ornate space at the waistline was a fortuitous outcome of Kōrin’s creativity or if he was cognizant that fashionable kosode design of the day left a blank area around the waistline, a stylistic response to the widening of the obi, which began in the Genroku era. SST

30
Kosode with net pattern, chrysanthemums, and characters

1668/1704
Tie-dyeing, stenciled imitation tie-dyeing, and silk and metallic thread embroidery on figured silk satin
158.5 x 139.6 (62 3/8 x 55)
Tokyo National Museum

• The design of this Genroku-era kosode maintains vestiges of the dynamic curved layout established on earlier Kanbun-style examples (see cat. 5). A striking fishing-net pattern rendered in dark indigo tie-dyeing (*kanoko shibori*) is strategically placed across the upper back from the left to the right sleeve, at the right hip, and near the lower-left hem. The net pattern brings to mind images of the ocean or flowing water. The addition of chrysanthemums suggests longevity and can be traced to a popular legend of the Chrysanthemum Boy (*Kikujidō*), who drank the dew of chrysanthemum petals and became immortal.

Like the flowers on this robe, the Chinese characters are rendered in either embroidery or a stenciled imitation tie-dye technique (*kata kanoko*). This type of stenciling was developed as a substitute for the labor intensive and therefore expensive tie-dyeing technique that was the subject of a sumptuary law in 1683 intended to squelch the ostentatious display of wealth by the townspeople. This luxurious robe not only gave evidence of the owner’s wealth but also displayed the wearer’s wit, imagination, and literacy — and tested the visual and literary acumen of the viewer. SST

31
Kosode with water, larch flowers, and wisteria

First half of eighteenth century
Tie-dyeing, stenciled imitation tie-dyeing, silk and metallic thread embroidery, and ink on figured silk satin
160 x 120 (63 x 47 1/4)
Tokyo National Museum

• The design layout of this kosode is characteristic of the Genroku era. While still concentrated on the right side of the garment, the motifs begin to encroach on the vast negative space that would have been seen on Kanbun-era kosode. Tie-dyed (*kanoko shibori*), stenciled imitation tie-dyed (*kata kanoko*), and ink-painted larch flowers appear magnified and robust. The center of each flower is embellished with three circular forms filled with gold embroidery threads laid and stitched down. The black ink flowers are further outlined with couched gold thread. Wisteria blossoms, embroidered in either silk or gold thread, hang downward, while the jagged edges of the diagonal blue tie-dyed area along the right side of the kosode also aim toward the hem. In this design of playful visual ambiguity, the blue of the diagonal area suggests water, while its tie-dyed pattern resembles wood grain. SST







32

Kosode with diagonal stripes and poetry design

Last quarter of seventeenth century
Tie-dyeing and silk and metallic
thread embroidery on figured
silk satin

156 x 136 (61³/₈ x 53¹/₂)

Tokyo National Museum

• Words from a poem by Princess Saigū no Nyōgo (929 – 985), one of the Thirty-six Immortal Poets, are arranged asymmetrically on this early Edo-period kosode. The placement of the characters is reminiscent of a compo-

sitional format of calligraphy known as scattered writing (*chirashigaki*), which was popular in the Nara (710 – 794) and Heian periods. During the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries artists in the Kyoto area revived this elegant, aristocratic manner of writing. Variations in the size and thickness of the skillfully tie-dyed and embroidered characters on this kosode emulate the writing style of Hon'ami Kōetsu, a master of calligraphy and scattered writing designs.

The poem, number 451 in the *Collection of Gleanings of Japanese Poems* (*Shūi wakashū*), a mid-Heian-period imperial anthology, reads: “When winds blow down from off the peak and

through the pines into the koto's strain, where does the music start? Is it on the mountain ridge or on the zither bridge?” (translated by Thomas Blenman Hare).

The colorful diagonal stripes on the kosode appear as a decorative background, but additional meaning can be attached to them because of a pun in the poem. The poet uses a particle that is homonymous with the words for “string” and “ridge”; referring to the koto and mountain imagery, the stripes here could represent either zither strings or the slope of a mountain. SST



33
Kosode with snowflake, bamboo, and blossoming plum tree design
Early eighteenth century
Tie-dyeing and silk and metallic thread embroidery on figured silk satin
145 x 126 (57¹/₈ x 49⁵/₈)
National Museum of Japanese History, Chiba, Nomura Collection

• This kosode is decorated with crenelated semicircular forms that represent abstract snowflake roundels (*yukiwa*) nestled amid the meandering branches of a blossoming plum

tree. The motif is shown against bamboo stalks that are bent to create sweeping curved lines reminiscent of the compositional format often seen on Kanbun-era kosode. The fan-shaped snowflakes are similar in profile to the vegetation of pine trees often depicted by Japanese artists. By alluding to the pine in this clever way, an association is drawn to the beloved combination of pine, bamboo, and plum, which symbolize, respectively, longevity, resilience, and regeneration.

The time-consuming kanoko shibori tie-dyeing technique was used to define most of the design elements on this mid-Edo-period kosode. Some of

the plum blossoms were outlined with running stitches that were then tightly drawn together and wrapped with bamboo sheaths to resist the dye when the fabric was immersed in a dye vat (*bōshi shibori*). These blossoms were then detailed with light green silk embroidery floss. On blossoms where the embroidery has been lost, ink underdrawings are revealed. Smaller blossoms and leaves were added with couched gold metallic thread. The resultant lush design is characteristic of kosode produced during the Genroku era. SST

34

Melon-shaped dish with melon design

1691/1749

Utsutsugawa ware

Stoneware with white slip, iron oxide,
and copper green glazeLength 14.9 (5 ⁷/₈)

The Kyushu Ceramic Museum, Saga

Illustrated page 40

• Utsutsugawa ware was made for a little more than fifty years during the first half of the eighteenth century in what is currently the Nagasaki Prefecture, Kyushu. It is justifiably famous for its delicate forms and refined decoration. The best Utsutsugawa pieces play with spatial ambiguity in both form and design.

Utsutsugawa ware was established as the official pottery of the Isahaya domain in 1691 by a potter named Tanaka Keibuzaemon from Arita. The Isahaya were vassals of the Nabeshima family, which granted them permission to open a kiln and to make only bowls and dishes. Production of these ceramics peaked during the Genroku era but eventually ceased in 1749, perhaps because of the expansion of the nearby porcelain kilns.

This dish exhibits all of the design qualities that make Utsutsugawa ware one of the most striking stonewares produced in the second half of the Edo period. It is formed in the shape of a melon, with white slip applied in a circular pattern and sections of the melon delineated in iron oxide. A smaller melon is naturalistically depicted inside the dish, with flowers and leaves on vines that spread across the lower half of the piece and even spill onto the exterior. The painted melon appears to grow out of the sculptured melon shape of the overall vessel. The counterclockwise swirl of white slip draws the eye back into the center, however. These ambiguous spatial relationships are an example of playfulness (*asobi*) in Edo-period Japanese artistic production. NCR



35

Square dish with wisteria design

1691/1749

Utsutsugawa ware

Stoneware with white slip, iron oxide,
and copper green glazeWidth 18.2 (7 ¹/₈)

The Kyushu Ceramic Museum, Saga

• This dish was formed on a potter's wheel, then placed into a press-mold, after which the corners were cut off and the edges sliced clean. The iron-rich clay body is extremely dark and thinly formed.

The designs on the interior and the exterior of the piece are different in spirit and execution. On the interior the lower right half is covered diagonally with dabbled slip in an abstract pattern reminiscent of geometric designs on some textiles. A realistic and carefully drawn wisteria branch appears to grow from the slip design. Wisteria branches were popular designs during the Genroku era and were often seen in textile pattern books and on kosode textiles. The exterior of the piece has a circular slip design applied in a *hakeme* method (brushed slip).

This dish would have been part of a set of five and used as a side dish (*mukōzuke*) to hold food during a meal accompanying a tea ceremony. NCR



36 (writing box not shown)

36
Ogawa Haritsu (1663 – 1747)
Writing-paper box and writing box with shell design

Second quarter of eighteenth century
Lacquer on wood with makie
Writing-paper box: 14.5 x 40.5 x 31.3
(5 3/4 x 16 x 12 3/8)
Writing box: 5 x 24.5 x 22 (2 x 9 5/8 x 8 5/8)
Suntory Museum of Art, Tokyo

• Ogawa Haritsu worked in a strikingly original style in a variety of media. In addition to lacquerwork, he created paintings, screens, and *inrō*, as well as poetry. Born in Ise, he moved to Edo, where he studied poetry with the famous haiku artist Matsuo Bashō (1644–1694). He began to lead a life of dissipation, however, and soon came to financial ruin. Indeed the first character of the name “Haritsu,” which he took during this period, refers to his intemperance. He was fifty when he gained renown as a lacquer artist, and sixty-one in 1723 when he began to

work for the Tsugaru lord Nobutoshi in the most northern and remote area of Japan. The Tsugaru, leading patrons of the arts, also employed Ogata Kōrin (see cat. 29).

Haritsu’s unique lacquerwork might have been based on Ming-dynasty prototypes. He often combined ceramic, lead, tin, ivory, sheet metal, and agate in inlays that he made as lifelike as possible by employing the high-relief *takamakie* technique. Allusions or parody (*mitate*) and naturalistic depictions (*shasei*) were beginning to come into vogue, and Haritsu capitalized on the trend. His novel approach and his choice of unusual themes can be seen on these two boxes with shell designs.

The writing-paper box has chamfered corners, while the corners of the writing box are rounded. Trays nestled into the latter were used to store writing supplies. The lids were decorated in the makie technique, with shells and seaweed inlaid in clay, lead, and tin. On the lids there are clay seals of the word *ritsuō* (old [Ha]ritsu) and the character *kan* (seal). Haritsu became one of the most celebrated lacquer workers in Edo. NCR

37
Ogawa Haritsu (1663 – 1747)
Writing-paper box and writing box with dragonfly design

Second quarter of eighteenth century
Lacquer on wood with makie
Writing-paper box: 12.7 x 40 x 30.8
(5 x 15 3/4 x 12 1/8)
Writing box: 4.4 x 25.5 x 16.7
(1 3/4 x 10 x 6 5/8)
Agency for Cultural Affairs, Tokyo

Illustrated page 53

• Ogawa Haritsu’s virtuosity shines in his lacquerwork. The butterflies and dragonflies on these two boxes cover not only the lid but the sides as well. Their lifelike depictions, in varied materials and colors, are juxtaposed against a flat-patterned background, which creates a tension between motif and ground. A few of the butterflies and dragonflies actually overlap the upper and lower sections of the boxes, in effect unifying the two pieces. The insects generally appear to be flying toward the center of the lids.

The butterfly is a traditional symbol of summer and joy, whereas the dragonfly is a fall insect and has often been used as a symbol for Japan. The dragonfly can be seen as early as the Yayoi period (c. 200 BC – AD 250), cast as decoration on large metal bells. It became linked with the warrior class during the Kamakura period, mostly because it moved quickly and had a voracious appetite for small bugs. The dragonfly was used at that time to decorate arrows and other military objects. NCR

38
Yamada Jōkasai (c. 1681 – 1704)
Inrō, ojime, and netsuke:
View of pasture

Lacquer with makie;
ojime coral; netsuke ivory
Height of inrō 10 (3⁷/₈)
Tokyo National Museum

39
Shiomi Seisei (1647 – 1722)
Inrō, ojime, and netsuke:
Well's head

Lacquer with makie and
mother-of-pearl; netsuke ivory
Height of inrō 7.3 (2⁷/₈)
Tokyo National Museum

40
Iizuka Tōyō (active 1764 – 1772)
Inrō, ojime, and netsuke:
Domestic fowl

Lacquer with makie; netsuke amber
Height of inrō 8.2 (3¹/₄)
Tokyo National Museum

41
Shibayama school
Inrō, ojime, and netsuke:
Bird and flower

Lacquer with makie and
various inlays
Height of inrō 8.8 (3¹/₂)
Tokyo National Museum

42
Shiomi Seisei (1647 – 1722)
Inrō, ojime, and netsuke:
Mouse

Lacquer with makie; netsuke
black persimmon
Height of inrō 6.7 (2⁵/₈)
Tokyo National Museum

43
Hasegawa Shigeyoshi
(late eighteenth century)
Inrō, ojime, and netsuke:
Folded papers

Lacquer with makie; ojime gold;
netsuke stained ivory
Height of inrō 7 (2³/₄)
Tokyo National Museum

44
Mizutani school
Inrō, ojime, and netsuke:
Old coins

Lacquer with makie; netsuke wood
Height of inrō 7.3 (2⁷/₈)
Tokyo National Museum

45
Kajikawa school
Inrō, ojime, and netsuke:
Hawk and pine tree

Lacquer with makie; ojime coral;
netsuke wood
Height of inrō 6.1 (2³/₈)
Tokyo National Museum

46
Iizuka Tōyō (active 1764 – 1772)
Inrō, ojime, and netsuke:
Wild geese and reeds

Lacquer with makie; netsuke bamboo
Height of inrō 8.2 (3¹/₄)
Tokyo National Museum

47
Koma Kanya (nineteenth century)
Inrō, ojime, and netsuke:
Cicada

Bamboo with makie;
ojime metal; netsuke ivory
Height of inrō 6.3 (2¹/₂)
Tokyo National Museum

• These hanging “pouches” are made up of three components — inrō, ojime, and netsuke — bound together by a silken cord. The inrō is a tiered, shaped container, usually made from wood, lacquer, or ivory. The ojime is the bead that pulls together the silken cord. And the netsuke is a toggle, fixed at one end of the cord to prevent the inrō from slipping off the sash from which it would have been hung.

Inrō are thought to have originated in China and been brought into Japan sometime in the fourteenth century. They are first mentioned in a famous document of 1320 as being a round or square stacked box made of carved lacquer that could hold fruit as well as a seal and a stamp pad. Inrō (literally “seal pouches”) were used by merchants and samurai alike to carry the seals necessary for completing transactions. By the early Edo period the tiers of the inrō were used to contain the powdered medicines popular at the time. Inrō designs generally referred to the seasons and would be worn accordingly. In the early 1600s inrō were carried together with a money pouch.

In the early seventeenth century netsuke were simple in form, but by the 1690s, when they were first depicted in a woodblock book of various professions (*Kunmō zui*), they had started to become an art form on their own. Netsuke carvers were first listed as residing all over Japan in a book of 1781 that focused on swords and related paraphernalia (*Sōken kishō*). As a rule, eighteenth-century netsuke are larger than those of the nineteenth century, which tend to be miniaturized. NCR



38



39



40



41



42



43



44



45



46



47

48
Aoki Mokubei (1767 – 1833)
Utensils for the sencha tea ceremony

c. 1832
Height of brazier 29.8 (11 ³/₄)
Height of teapot 11.1 (4 ³/₈)
Height of tea caddy 12.3 (4 ⁷/₈)
Diameter of five teacups 6.7 (2 ⁵/₈)
Idemitsu Museum of Arts, Tokyo

• Aoki Mokubei was both a painter and a potter and was also known as a literatus (*bunjin*). He was born in Kyoto, where his father operated a tea house called Kiya in the Nawatemachi section of Gion. His birth name was Kiya Sahei, but he took several artist names, including Mokubei. He studied poetry, calligraphy, and painting beginning in childhood, but it was not until he was in his twenties that he began to learn Chinese ceramic techniques and studied with Okuda Eisen. Mokubei’s fame as a potter spread quickly, and he was invited in 1801 by Lord Tokugawa Harutomi to help with the local pottery in the Kii domain, where he developed Zuishi ware.

Mokubei specialized in making wares for the *sencha* (steeped tea) ceremony in the style of Ming Chinese and Choson Korean ceramics, which became popular in the second half of the eighteenth century. He had learned about antiquities, particularly Chinese ceramics, beginning with his apprenticeship to the seal engraver Kō Fuyō. He was on friendly terms with many of the intelligentsia of the day, including Tanomura Chikuden. By the time he was twenty-seven, he was a

central figure in the Kamigata (Kyoto-Osaka) circle of literati, along with Kimura Kenkado, who formed an impressive collection of Chinese antiquities and specialized in *sencha*.

Senchadō, or the Way of Steeped Tea, differs from the better-known tea ceremony that employs whisked tea (*matcha*). This form of drinking *sencha* began in Japan during the confused transition from the Ming to the Qing dynasty in China. Some high-placed Ming sympathizers took refuge in Japan, bringing contemporary customs with them. In particular, the Ōbaku Zen sect sprang from these roots, and the drinking of steeped tea was very much part of the practice. The Ōbaku Zen temple of Manpukuji was to become a center of Chinese learning in Kyoto, which attracted many *sencha* specialists, including Mokubei. *Sencha* was often drunk in Chinese or Chinese-inspired ceramics and was part of a larger literati scene that involved poetry, music, and communal discussions. Guidebooks on the practice of *sencha* soon began to be published, and the spirit of the gathering started to change from communal meetings to teacher-student circles toward the end of the Edo period.

This group of utensils for making *sencha* for five people, each piece created by Aoki Mokubei, reveals the potter’s eclectic background and studies. The shape of the teapot is based on the Chinese Yixing ware that was favored by the literati, but the purple, green, and yellow lead glazes derive from what is known in Japan as Kōchi ware, ceramics from south China thought to have been made in Cochin. The glaze on the tea caddy appears to be modeled on Longquan celadons from China, which were popular in medieval Japan, but the form of the piece reflects metal prototypes. The

low-relief design on the outside of the tea caddy is a Kylin (mythical beast), and there is a large flower on the lid that Mokubei also used in two of his teapots. The five small cups, each with a different design on the exterior (fish, shrimp, crab, seaweed, and shellfish), are modeled after Dutch Delft ceramics that were occasionally imported into Japan at this time by the Dutch East India Company. The bases of the cups are stamped with the mark “Rōbei.” Finally, the brazier is made of earthenware and has a relief carving of two dancing Chinese girls on a stage surrounded by camellia flowers. The mixture of styles and periods of exotic origin was one of the hallmarks of Mokubei’s aesthetic.

There are inscriptions both on the brazier and on the underside of the stand, the former accompanied by two seals, one reading “Awata” and the other “Mokubei,” and the latter accompanied by the seals “Aoki” and “Mokubei.”

The brazier was ordered by Iwasaki Ōu from the Koshu Otsu domain in 1832, just one year before Mokubei died. NCR





49
Nin'ami Dōhachi (1783 – 1855)
Handled bowl with snow on bamboo design

c. 1840s – 1850s
Stoneware with underglaze iron oxide and white slip
Diameter 23.9 (9³/₈)
Agency for Cultural Affairs, Tokyo

• Nin'ami Dōhachi was the second son of a second-generation family of potters. His father moved to Kyoto, where he established a kiln at Awataguchi and died in 1804. Nin'ami studied with Okuda Eisen and, unlike his contemporaries Aoki Mokubei (cat. 48) and Eiraku Hozen (cat. 50), focused on Japanese-style wares, particularly those of the Kyoto art potters Ninsei, Kōetsu, and Kenzan.

This piece is modeled after an original by Kenzan that Dōhachi must have seen. In fact three similar bowls were made by Dōhachi, all in the manner of Kenzan. Only the handle differs. Here an innovative bamboo-strap design adds to the feeling of winter established in the main motif: bamboo leaves painted in an iron oxide underglaze over which white slip has been placed to give the impression of snow. The motif continues on the interior and exterior of the bowl. This type of vessel could have been used in a tea ceremony, for either whisked tea or steeped tea, probably during the winter.

Three five-sided feet are attached to the unglazed base, where the impressed seal “Momoyama” appears, used by Dōhachi near the end of his life. NCR

50
Eiraku Hozen (1795 – 1854)
Water jar with carp and waves design

Early eighteenth century
Stoneware with colored glaze, lacquer, and gold foil
Height 15.7 (6¹/₈)
Agency for Cultural Affairs, Tokyo

Illustrated page 64

• Eiraku Hozen was from the eleventh generation of a Kyoto family of potters that specialized in making earthenware braziers for the sencha tea ceremony. Along with Aoki Mokubei and Nin'ami Dōhachi, he was one of the finest Kyoto potters of the later Edo period.

Hozen traveled with his father, Ryōzen, to the Kii domain and created a type of ceramic called Kairakuen ware for the Tokugawa family, imitating southern Chinese ceramics. He worked in a great variety of styles, both in stoneware and in porcelain, and made pieces for both types of tea ceremony.

This fresh water jar is made in the Kōchi style of south Chinese Ming dynasty ware, borrowing not only the classic coloring but the motif as well. The carp jumping from the waves had appeared on Japanese Hizen ware destined for export to southeast Asia beginning in the 1640s. But it was Hozen who revived the motif in the later Edo period.

The water jar is decorated with two carp, one on either side. They are naturalistically depicted springing out of the waves on their backs and facing different directions. The contours of the waves and the fish are delineated with raised lines of slip. The fish were covered with gold leaf and a layer of lacquer in a process called *byakudannuri*. The rest of the exterior of the vessel, including the entire base, is covered with a bright copper green glaze. The interior is half green and half white. In the middle of the base there is a seal reading “Eiraku.” The vessel would have been covered with a black lacquer top. NCR



Peace

prevailed in Japan,

Arms:

**The Balance
of Peace**

VICTOR HARRIS

with some interruptions, throughout the Edo period — from the Tokugawa military victory at Osaka Castle in 1615, and the final expunging of the Toyotomi family, until the disturbances of the Bakumatsu era in the last decades of the period. It might indeed be said that Japan provided a model of benign dictatorship, for although penalties for transgression of the Tokugawa laws were severe, and calamities occurred periodically, the nation thrived for more than two centuries at peace. Central to the stability of the period was the established custom for all samurai, who together constituted several percent of the population, to carry two swords wherever they went, from boyhood through old age. The swords themselves were revered as symbols of the whole system of government and as objects with an inherent spirituality. Some swords are even installed in Shinto shrines as manifestations of the resident deity. Others are sculpted and engraved with representations of Buddhist deities or with invocations to them.

The prototype for the Tokugawa system was the first military government at Kamakura, established by Minamoto no Yoritomo (1147 – 1199) after his victory over the Taira clan and their allies in 1185. During the Kamakura period (1185 – 1333) it was the philosophy of the samurai that had the greatest impact on the nation, and although this government was not to survive more than a few generations, its code of the warrior (*bushidō*) formed the basis on which succeeding military rulers attempted to control the country.

During much of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries Japan was engaged in civil wars, as time after time the samurai had attempted to reconcile central government with military control over the provincial clans while preserving the imperial system. The gun had played a major part in subduing the warring clans at the end of this Age of the Country at War, and it was doubtless the knowledge, both conscious and subconscious, that the gun would put a quick stop to future insurrection that made the peace of the Tokugawa period inevitable.

But the violent nature of the samurai had to be controlled, and the Tokugawa shogun did this by means of a succession of edicts, which they ruthlessly enforced. In these Laws for Military Houses (*buke shohatto*) — published in 1615, the year that Osaka Castle fell, and revised in 1635 — fifteen regulations were supplemented in detail. The rules covered the military and literary education of the samurai, interclan marriages, and prohibition of alliances.

Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542 – 1616) had placated his enemies after the battle of Sekigahara in 1600 by allowing them to hold lands and keep a garrisoned castle. Under the terms of the Laws for Military Houses, however, all strongholds other than the official castle residence of the daimyo were dismantled. At the same time the Tokugawa compelled certain daimyo to assist in building and repairing Edo Castle and other castles they occupied. Although some daimyo held land that they already regarded as theirs, others were allotted land. These *tozama* (literally “outside gentlemen”) included some of the most powerful clans. Among them were the Date in the north, the Mōri in Chōshū in western Honshu, as well as the Shimazu of Satsuma and the Nabeshima of Saga on Kyushu, who held lands far from the city of Edo. From those in the west (Honshu and Kyushu) there was the ever-present fear of an alliance in insurrection; moreover these domains closest to the continent were the most likely to interact with foreign nations. Of the roughly 260 daimyo, the allies of Ieyasu at Sekigahara, who were the hereditary daimyo (*fudai daimyo*), were given lands concentrated around central Japan, but some were placed in strategic positions in the provinces where they might be rallied to prevent any movement of the more remote *tozama* daimyo.

Under the terms of Tokugawa control, daimyo could at any time be deprived of their land and possessions, moved en bloc to a different domain, or subjected to adjustments in income, either increases or decreases in the annual stipend units of rice (*koku*). The most effective measure outlined in the Laws for Military Houses was the system of alternate attendance, whereby the provincial lords were forced to spend the summer months in Edo and leave their close families in Edo as hostages when they returned to their domains. This measure was enforced by a system of borders within Edo, which women could not pass without written permission from the government. This simple and effective regulation entailed costly and complex arrangements. Daimyo had to maintain sufficiently grand and secure mansions on allotted land in Edo to maintain prestige, while keeping loyal retainers to conduct their affairs in both the home province and in Edo when they were away. The annual journey on foot to Edo was a grand procession of armed retainers in rich apparel, varying from a few hundred to several thousand persons depending on the wealth and position of the daimyo. It is largely because of these processions that the armorer’s craft flourished well into the nineteenth century and that so many fine pieces of armor, weaponry, and riding equipment survive.

cat. 54
Saddle and stirrups with
cosmetic brush design,
eighteenth century,
saddle of lacquer over wood
with *makie*,
stirrups of iron and lacquer
over wood with *makie*,
height of saddle 38 (15),
Tokyo National Museum



ARMOR

The form of Japanese armor was well established in the middle of the Heian period (794–1185). Thus the sword, the bow, the *naginata* (a glaive with a curved blade broader than that of a sword), and other eleventh-century armor would not have looked out of place in a nineteenth-century daimyo's procession. Changes were introduced over the ages in accordance with changes in fashions of warfare, but the basic design of the armor remained the same.

Armor of the early periods was greatly prized. A daimyo might choose to wear a piece of armor made in the Heian- or Kamakura-period style and even have an early helmet bowl built into the copy. The early armors, known as *ōyoroi* (great harnesses), were designed to withstand arrows and glancing sword cuts and at the same time allow maximum freedom of movement for the wearer to bring his own weapons into play. The principle of the *ōyoroi* was flexibility. Apart from the helmet, the main components are made up of numerous slender lacquered iron plates, each just a few inches long but linked together by braid in horizontal rows. The boxlike cuirass is formed of four walls, each composed of one or more layers of sections of such linked rows and joined by cords at the four corners. The whole was secured on the right side of the body, with a further piece, the *waidate*, covering the join. A solid iron sheet, the breast plate (*munaita*), protected the upper part of the chest. The cuirass was covered with a leather piece, often dyed and embossed, which allowed the bowstring to pass unimpeded across the body. The whole was hung over the shoulder by substantial straps.

A skirt (*kusazuri*) of linked rows of plates was suspended in four sections from the front, back, and sides. Two large rectangular shoulder guards (*ōsode*) of the same flexible construction hung from the shoulders; tied loosely to the arms and across the back, they acted as moving shields when the arms were raised. A close-fitting sleeve (*kote*) was worn on the left arm only in the early period, since the right arm had to be free for aiming arrows and the left was exposed when carrying the bow. The sleeve — made of silk and covered with chain mail as well as longitudinal iron plates on the upper and lower arm and on the back of the hand — extended from the shoulder to the fingertips. Two



cat. 52
Armor made for Tokugawa Iemitsu,
seventeenth century,
iron, lacquer, leather, and silk,
height of cuirass 34.2 (13 1/2),
Kunōzan Tōshōgū Shrine,
Shizuoka

rectangular plates hanging loosely from the shoulders would swing to protect the armpits when the bow was aimed to the side.

The bow was the main weapon of the mounted archer. Measuring around two meters long, it was thus taller than the archer. The grip was set below the center of the bow to facilitate handling, especially when mounted warfare required the bow to be moved from one side of the horse's head to the other. The wooden saddle and iron stirrups were designed very much with horseback archery in mind. The saddle, the form of which changed little by the Edo period, is composed of four pieces: a pommel, a cantle, and two longitudinal bars that form the seat. The pieces are tied together with cord for a strong, flexible structure. Laterals on the pommel and cantle provided rests for the upper legs. The stirrups are platforms large enough to hold the whole foot and substantial enough so that the rider could stand up, wedged against the lateral pieces of the saddle, to bring his bow to bear on the enemy. A set of saddle and stirrups designed primarily for horseback archery, with a design of cosmetic brushes in gold *makie* lacquer (cat. 54), exemplifies the more luxurious equipment owned by the higher-ranking warriors.

The most important component of a set of armor was the helmet. The bowl of the helmet is made up of curved triangular iron plates riveted together vertically. The rivets of old helmets, known as star helmets (*hoshi kabuto*), protrude from the surface as spikes. An Edo-period example was made as part of an armor for Tokugawa Iemitsu (1604–1651), the third shogun of the family. It has a larger number of plates and rivets than early examples, and the rivets are much smaller (cat. 52). The plates come together at the center of the crown, leaving a round hole (*tehen no ana*) defined by a soft metal decorative surround. Early helmets have large openings at the top, which may have derived from the custom of wrapping the hair in a cloth cap and pushing it through the hole to retain the helmet on the head. This practice seems not to have survived the Heian period. On all helmets a skirt composed of rows of linked platelets protected the neck and shoulders. These neck guards (*shikoro*) hung around the back and sides of the bowl and were articulated like the other parts of the armor to allow movement of the head and arms. The ends are turned back, forming two flaplike sections (*fukigaeshi*) on which the clan badge was often fixed, and which provided an extra defense below the rim of the helmet bowl. During the Kamakura period some helmets were made with the rivets concealed and the edges of the plates turned up to form vertical ridges (*suji kabuto*). At the same time the armor became lighter, a development that continued over the course of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. One type (*dōmaru*) wrapped around the body and closed on the right side, and one type (*haramaki*) closed down the center of the back. Both had a skirt composed of several hanging portions laced together loosely to give complete freedom of movement to soldiers on foot.

During the Muromachi period (1392–1573) large armies of foot soldiers armed with pole-arms — and with guns beginning in the middle of the sixteenth century — changed the shape of warfare. The ordinary soldier had but a simple armor, often comprising no more than a breastplate with a short skirt and a shallow conical helmet formed of a thin sheet of iron. The mounted archer was no match for great numbers of foot soldiers with long spears and matchlocks. Thus substantial helmet flaps were replaced with token flaps a fraction of the size, now intended only as decoration or as supports for the crest (*mon*). The large shoulder pieces, which had served as shields for the sides of the trunk when the bow was raised, were replaced by smaller pieces covering just the shoulders and upper arms. A new apron-like set of thigh protectors (*haidate*) was worn beneath the skirt, and other new components were



added to shield most of the body. Iron face guards (*menpō*) covered either the lower half or the whole of the face. Some had detachable sections so that, for example, the nose protector might be removed. Some came to be modeled in the form of ferocious faces, with boar-hair mustaches and violent expressions. From the bottom of the mask hung an articulated piece to cover the throat, and this was often supplemented by a gorget (*nodowa*) of metal plate. The two rectangular components that had hung from the cuirass to protect the front of the shoulders, upper chest, and armpits were replaced by a decorative leaf-shaped piece (*gyōyō*) that covered the point at which the shoulder straps attached to the cuirass. This light armor effectively shielded the whole of the body.

Known as *tōsei gusoku*, or “modern equipment,” light armor remained the standard type during the Edo period. But in the latter part of the sixteenth century more exotic and grotesque forms of armor appeared. This was an age when the individual could rise in status by military merit, and many expressed their individuality with armor of striking inventiveness. The standard helmet bowl was still made, but others assumed new and fantastic shapes. The head-shaped type (*zunari*) has a rounded elongated form to which a forehead with wrinkles and eyebrows could be added. The peach-shaped type (*momonari*), which derived from the European morion, was made of two rounded iron sheets fixed together from front to back along a centerline. The riveted iron plates of the tied-towel type (*oki-tenugui*) looked like a towel knotted around the wearer’s head. Some helmets imitated the paper court hat (*eboshi*); some copied European shapes; and some were built up into striking geometrical forms. Others were given the appearance of monstrous or animal heads. Certain helmets were even humorous, being fashioned in the shape of an inverted bowl (cat. 55) or with features of a rabbit or an ass. One helmet rising into two high rabbit’s ears displays stylized anthropomorphic wrinkles and eyebrows on the plate covering the forehead and brings the ears into a strangely acceptable position on a human head (cat. 59).

cat. 55
Helmet in the form of an upside-down bowl, 1688, iron and lacquer, height of helmet bowl 19 (7 1/2), Fukuoka City Museum

cat. 59
Helmet with rabbit’s ears, sixteenth century, wood and/or papier-mâché, iron, lacquer, and silver foil, height of helmet bowl 39.5 (15 1/2), National Museum of Japanese History, Chiba

cat. 80
Niō cuirass armor,
iron, lacquer, silk, leather,
and boar hair (on helmet),
height of cuirass and
skirt 65.2 (25⁷/₈),
Tokyo National Museum



An especially extravagant example of the so-called unusual helmets (*kawari kabuto*) is surmounted by a Buddhist tower inscribed with the invocation “Hail to the Buddha Amitabha” (*Namu Amida butsu*) (cat. 75). The bowl is composed of a few plates riveted together into the Etchū style, a high rounded form with rather flattened sides. The eccentric beast on the crest resembles the lionlike *shishi*, with horns and bovine ears. Documentation indicates that the helmet was made for a deeply religious member of the Matsudaira clan by an armorer of the Iwai family. These unusual helmets continued to be made well into the Edo period.

European-style armor influenced the design not only of certain helmets but of other components of Japanese armor as well. One of the more frightening and extreme examples is the Niō set of armor (cat. 80), named after the pair of ferocious muscular guardian figures (Niō; Sanskrit: Dvarapala) found at either side of the gates of Buddhist temples. The cuirass is in the form of a naked male torso, composed of two red-lacquered iron pieces for the front and back of the trunk. The head-shaped bowl of the helmet is made of thick iron plate covered with the hair of a wild boar. This kind of helmet is known as *yarōtō*, literally “uncouth fellow helmet.” Another example (cat. 56) has the same fearsome coiffure, with the face mask lacquered red and a mustache of the same boar hair. It may be that these armors were meant to suggest foreigners, known as *nanban* (southern barbarians) and *akage* (red hair). Certainly the custom of molding armor in the shape of a human body existed in Europe long before this armor was made, and heavy iron-plate armor was produced in response to the introduction of fire-arms from Europe in the mid-sixteenth century. Cuirasses made of solid iron plate to withstand gunshots can be found with bullet marks left by tests.

Many of these various types of armor were reproduced in the Edo period, although the light armor remained the standard. Copies of *ōyoroi*, which were considerably lighter than the early armors, were commissioned by the daimyo, particularly during the last years of the warrior government, the Bakumatsu era, when a movement arose through many provinces to restore the military might of the Kamakura period in response to shows of force by the navies of the western powers. On the whole, the emphasis was on presenting an impressive spectacle as the daimyo and his retainers proceeded to and from shogunal attendance. Some *tozama* daimyo, however, maintained a military bearing because the memory of their old enmity in the battles of unification lingered despite their recognized subservience to the government. Date Masamune (1567 – 1636) and his successors wore armor of solid iron plate, presumably very uncomfortable, on the long march from Sendai in the north to Edo up to the last days of the Tokugawa government.

JINBAORI
SURCOAT

The sleeveless surcoat became fashionable during the civil wars of the Muromachi period (see cats. 61, 62). Hemp and silk were used along with wool and velvet from overseas. The warmth and durability of the imported materials made them ideal. The *jinbaori* surcoat was often brightly colored and bore striking motifs to make the wearer appear more impressive on the battlefield. During the Edo period they remained a luxurious accessory. Heavy coats of wool, hemp, leather, silk, deerskin, feathers, paper, velvet, and brocade were made for winter, and light gauze coats for summer. The *jinbaori* was originally influenced by, or derived from, European coats, and some had European-style designs. A *jinbaori* (cat. 63) owned by Maeda Shigehiro (1719 – 1753) has a design of the masts and sails of a European ship, indicating the persistence of western motifs.

cat. 63
Jinbaori with ship's sails,
eighteenth century,
wool and other textiles,
85 x 100 (33 1/2 x 39 3/8),
Maeda Ikutokukai Foundation,
Tokyo



SWORDS In the distant past centers of sword making had been located near supplies of iron ore and the forests needed to make charcoal for the smelting process — places like Bizen and Bitchū on the San'indō and San'yodō roads, Izumo on the north coast, and Hoki and Bungo provinces in Kyushu. During the Heian period groups of smiths worked in the Buddhist temples of Yamato province, around Nara, where monks controlled their estates assisted by force of arms. Other smiths worked in the capital of Kyoto. Sometime after the middle Heian period the curved single-edged Japanese sword was perfected. The method of construction involved a repeated folding process that gave a strong laminate structure to the blade, which was hardened along its cutting edge by a heating and quenching process. When the blade was painstakingly polished for weeks or longer, the metallurgical effects became visible on the surface: a grain structure caused by the folding process, varying hues and textures resulting from the heat treatment and the carbon distribution in the body of the blade, and the characteristic *hamon*, the “badge of the blade,” indicating the hardened edge (see cat. 64). The *hamon* of the early swords, which were not controlled, were based on natural phenomena and classified with words for the waves of the sea, cloud formations, the profile of distant mountains, lightning, drifting sands, and so on.

From this early time the sword was appreciated as a superior cutting weapon, a symbol of the spiritual study of the samurai, and an object of intrinsic beauty. The *Record of the Engi Era*, dating from 901 to 922, tells of the complex process of polishing, suggesting that the beauty of the surface was recognized then. Another document, dating from 1316, lists famous smiths, describes their schools province by province, and gives details of their swords' hamon and other blade characteristics. By the Kamakura period the study of swords was regarded as a spiritual pursuit in its own right, and appraisers like Nagayoshi Ōmi Nyūdō are recorded by Buddhist titles, an indication of their standing. After the first military government was established in 1185 at Kamakura, smiths from all over Japan gathered there to make blades for the Minamoto and then the Hōjō regimes. Masamune, generally held to be the greatest of all Japanese swordsmiths, worked in the late Kamakura period. The fashion was for long swords with hamon that revealed clusters of bright crystals in the steel known as *nie*, or "boiling."

During the civil wars of the Muromachi period the high demand for swords resulted in a fall in quality. Most of the old centers declined, and Bizen and Minō provinces became the main suppliers to the conscript armies. In 1568 Oda Nobunaga (1534–1582) established his capital at Momoyama in Kyoto, symbolizing an end to the age of civil wars. Although there was to be further violence in the gradual consolidation of Tokugawa control, the Momoyama period (1573–1615) was relatively peaceful and allowed the revival of Kyoto and the provincial towns and cities. Foreign trade and internal commerce expanded. Magnificent castles and mansions were built. Organized pleasures became fashionable, a trend reflected in the variety of rich clothing and personal accessories flaunted by the successful among the military and merchant classes.

For the samurai the most desirable possessions were fine arms and armor, and most important of all was the sword. Blades by masters of the Heian era and the Nanbokuchō period (1336–1392) were acquired and often cut down to a length more convenient for wearing. As a result, long blades often lost the whole of their original tangs, along with any inscription. Sometimes the section of steel bearing the inscription, usually with the signature of the smith, was inset into a new tang. Specialist appraisers like the Hon'ami family would inlay an attribution in gold on the tang to indicate the name of the original smith and the man who had shortened the sword. Where no fine sword was to be had, contemporary copies were plentiful. Copies were sometimes constructed to appear shortened and were given spurious gold-inlaid signatures, often of famous smiths such as Masamune. Swords of the Momoyama and early Edo periods were consequently made in the shape of the cut-down blades from early periods, and efforts to reproduce the metallurgical characteristics put new life into the swordsmith's craft.

Swordsmiths vied with each other to make swords in the styles of the old masters and to gain the recognition that would secure them a post working directly for a daimyo. New styles evolved from interpretations of early styles. Disarmament of the nonsamurai classes had started in 1585, with the "sword hunt" at the temple complex on Mount Kōya where there were troublesome monk armies, and it continued with the national sword hunt of 1588. Thus poorer quality mass-produced weapons of the disbanded armies were removed from circulation, leading to the fashion for the broad gorgeous blades of the Kamakura period.

Tokugawa Ieyasu himself stated that "the sword is the soul of the samurai," and the weapon has come to symbolize Japan during the Edo period. The government made certain of this association. The manufacture and use of guns were regulated, thus the retinues that accompanied the daimyo on procession to and from the capital were armed with sword, pole-arm, and bows throughout the Edo period.

With the exception of some experimentation with flint, percussion, breech-loading, and even air guns, the limited armories of the daimyo held matchlock guns, which were never used in over two and a half centuries. The sword was the premier symbol of the whole system of government and gave such prestige to the bearer as would allow him to feel a proud part of the system that controlled him so utterly.

The Keichō era (1596–1614) is recognized as the start of the new swords or *shintō* era. The new swords movement started in Kyoto, where specialists like the Hon’ami family cut down the long swords of the Kamakura period to a convenient length for wearing in the town style — that is, thrust through the belt with the cutting edge uppermost. Umetada Myōju made swords in the old Yamashiro (Kyoto) and Soshū (Kamakura) styles and specialized in carving on the flat of the blades. Shinano no Kami Kunihiro, from Hyūga province in Kyushu, worked at Horigawa in Kyoto and nurtured many pupils whose descendants continued for generations. Whereas these smiths sold their swords for a living, many smiths obtained appointments to the daimyo in the new castle towns. A swordsmith who had moved from Shimosaka in Edo to Echizen province was summoned back in 1606 to work for the armies of both Ieyasu and the second shogun, Hidetada. The smith received his name, Yasutsugu (the *yasu* from Ieyasu), and the right to carve the Tokugawa crest, a triple hollyhock leaf, on the tangs of his blades. His family continued in Edo for several generations. Yamashiro no Kami Kunikane made swords with a straight grain in the old Yamato style for the Date clan in Sendai. Etchū no Kami Takahira, later called Kanewaka, worked in Etchū for the Maeda clan. Nanki Shigekuni worked for the Tokugawa branch in Kii province, Nobutaka and Masatsune for the Owari Tokugawa branch, and Tadayoshi for the Nabeshima clan in Hizen province.

With the establishment of the alternate-attendance system in 1635 and the strengthening of control by the central government in Edo, the demand for swords died out in Kyoto, and the smiths moved, some to the provinces, some to nearby Osaka, and some to Edo. The smiths who flourished in Osaka at this time made blades with contrived hamon in exuberant forms, like the bamboo curtain of Tanba no Kami Yoshimichi, the fist-shaped cluster of clover flowers of Kawachi no Kami Kunisuke, and the billowing waves of Tsuta Echizen no Kami Sukehiro (cat. 64). Sukehiro was born in 1637 in the town of Ashiya, which was renowned for ironwork, particularly kettles for the tea ceremony. Named Kan-no-Jō at birth, he studied under Soboro Sukehiro, whose adopted son he became. When his master died in 1655, Kan-no-Jō took the name Sukehiro, and within two years, at the age of twenty-one, he was retained by Aoyama Inaba no Kami Munetoshi, lord of Osaka Castle. Sukehiro died at the age of forty-two, but he left a great number of excellent blades. His forging grain is a tight and even small-plank grain (*koitame*), and the hamon of his work is rich in bright crystals of nie. His swords are characteristic of Osaka work, and he ranks with Inoue Shinkai, also of Osaka, and Kotetsu of Edo as one of the master smiths of the mid-seventeenth century.

The Osaka smiths found many clients for their flamboyant work among the merchants of the city, who were allowed to wear a short sword. The work of the Edo smiths tended to be more somber, and the underlying serious purpose of the blades was made clear by the dreadful practice of having them tested at the public execution ground, when the result of the test might be inlaid in a gold inscription on the tang.



Sections of the Laws for Military Houses defined the etiquette of dress and weaponry for the samurai. In 1623 commoners were prohibited from bearing arms. In 1640 the servants of samurai were restricted to carrying only short swords. In 1645 outlandish dress and conduct were prohibited, and the standard waistcoat (*kataginu*), worn over a jacket (*noshime*) and pleated trousers (*hakama*), was prescribed as formal wear for samurai in service. This formal attire (*kamishimo*, literally “top and bottom”) had to be of a quiet color — specifically, shades of brown and indigo from the eighteenth century on — and was to bear the crest of the clan to which the samurai belonged.

When in attendance at the imperial court and during public ceremonies, the shogun and the daimyo wore court garments derived from the clothing of Heian-period nobility. The *chonmage* hairstyle, with the hair tied back in a pigtail and the front of the head shaved, was made compulsory. The vermilion scabbards that had been all the rage since Toyotomi Hideyoshi’s time were banned. Large square *tsuba*, or sword guards, were also banned, since it was believed they could be used as steps for climbing walls. The length of a sword’s cutting edge was strictly limited. In 1683 Tokugawa Tsunatoshi prohibited certain persons, including artists and musicians, from carrying swords. Later, in 1798, the length of the *wakizashi* or companion sword, was restricted. To comply with the law, many *wakizashi* were cut down to just a few centimeters in length.

Different mountings were used for different occasions, so more than one set of mounts might be held for each blade. When the samurai was on horseback and wearing armor, the long sword (*tachi*) was loosely suspended by cords and carried with the cutting edge down; the sword and the mounting were bound with braid on both the hilt and the upper scabbard to avoid abrasion from the wearer’s armor. On duty in the capital, high-ranking warriors wore a special sword mounting (*efu dachi*) that lacked braid bindings and had a sword guard of a particular archaic shape. When on foot, the warrior was expected to carry a pair of swords: the shorter *shotō* or *wakizashi* was worn at all times, indoors and out, and the longer *daitō* was carried out of doors. The longer sword would be placed on a special stand by the entrances of buildings.

The matching pair of swords, or *daishō* (literally “large and small”), might be highly decorative in the provinces, but rules had to be observed in Edo. One matched pair (cat. 65) illustrates the lavishness available to wealthy samurai. The lacquer of the scabbard is embedded with polished sections of walnut shell. The metal fittings are of colored alloys and solid gold. The scabbards had to be lacquered black with Gotō-style fittings of a black-patinated alloy of copper (*shakudō*), although black-patinated iron sword guards were acceptable. The pommel (*kashira*) at the end of the hilt could be of black-lacquered horn, although black buffalo horn was preferable. The silk braid that bound the hilt had to be black or a subdued color. Clan crests might be inlaid on the sword guard of either the ancillary *kogatana* (utility

cat. 65
Pair of sword mountings,
wood, lacquer with makie,
ray skin, and silk,
lengths of short scabbard
76 (29^{7/8}),
long scabbard 99.5 (39^{1/8});
Hikone Castle Museum,
Shiga

METAL
COMPONENTS
OF SWORD
MOUNTINGS

knife) or the *kōgai* (a kind of bodkin), or they could form *menuki*, small decorative pieces bound on either side of the hilt. The collar and the pommel of the hilt would usually match if both were metal. All metal parts of both swords could match for luxurious mountings, and the blades might even be by the same maker, although it was very prestigious to have blades by different master smiths of earlier centuries.

The tradition of using shakudō fittings by the Gotō family dates from the Muromachi period, when Ashikaga Yorimasa gave a commission to Gotō Yūjō (1440–1512). The descendants of Yūjō served successive military rulers through seventeen generations over four centuries. The use of black was in accordance with ancient custom, for since the Nara period (710–794) swords whose mountings were wholly lacquered black existed alongside highly decorative mountings with gold-lacquered scabbards.

The shakudō copper alloy contained 1 to 5 percent gold and sometimes other metals such as silver. A poorly refined copper (*yamagane*, or “mountain metal”) contained trace impurities of arsenic and antimony, which seem to have been deliberately added to some shakudō during the Edo period. The nascent alloy is copper red, but it was patinated with various ingredients — among which plum vinegar is often named — to achieve black and near black. The color of fine shakudō was compared to a crow’s wings in the rain, but purple and other fine nuances occur in some shades of black obtained.

Standard Gotō work employed a shakudō ground of a regular raised pattern made with a hollow punch. The array of minute hemispherical protuberances was called *nanako*, or “fish roe.” This fine and geometrically accurate decorative technique probably originated in the punched surfaces of Chinese Tang-dynasty silver wares. Indeed early generations of the Gotō family specialized in Chinese-style designs inlaid in silver and gold, which were very much to the taste of the Ashikaga shogun. The designs included the flower, bird, insect, and animal designs prevalent in Yūjō’s native Minō province as well as Chinese Buddhist subjects like the monk Pundai (Japanese: Hotei), themes from Buddhist-inspired arts, legendary creatures, and subjects from Daoist and popular Chinese mythology.

Yūjō and other metalworkers of the early generations specialized in matching sets of three sword fittings — *menuki*, *kōgai*, and *kozuka* (the *kozuka* being the hilt for a utility knife secured at one side of the scabbard). The sets produced by the early Gotō masters were highly valued throughout the Edo period. The hollow decorative pieces were beaten out over forms of pitch, which is sometimes found still adhering to the inside. The subjects of the design were either sculpted into the ground or made separately and mechanically adhered to the ground using hammers, points, and chisels. Pieces sculpted in high relief might have details in silver and gold inlay.

The sword guard was the most important part of the mounting. The most visible piece of the ensemble, it had the crucial function of preventing the hand from slipping onto the blade in time of combat. The Gotō family and its offshoots made sword guards of shakudō throughout the Edo period, but there were many regional schools that used different metals. Some sword guards were made of iron and decorated with motifs sculpted into or above the ground, or pierced in positive or negative silhouette, which might be further embellished with a softer metal inlay.

In the peaceful period around the end of the seventeenth century, sword making suffered a momentary decline, but the demand for luxurious sword mountings increased. At this time it was common for the merchant class to carry richly embellished short swords, and the fittings became more widely appreciated as works of art in their own right. The repertoire of alloys and manufacturing tech-

niques widened. The alloy *shibuichi* (literally “one part in four”), which is four parts copper to one of silver, could be patinated to a range of silvers and grayish browns. *Shibuichi* became as popular as *shakudō*, and like *shakudō* it could be readily sculpted and inlaid with other metals. The number of metalworkers independent of the clans increased. Probably the most influential of these early practitioners of town carving (*machi bori*), as distinct from the Gotō and others involved in clan carving (*ie bori*), was Yokoya Sōmin (1670–1733). Sōmin specialized in the use of *shibuichi* and the newly popularized technique of line engraving in imitation of brushwork (*katakiri bori*, or “oblique cut carving”). The triangular point of the chisel was held at different angles to produce an outline cut of varying depths and widths, and the angles of the walls of the cuts could catch the light and enhance the impression of a calligraphic brushstroke.

Sōmin had apprenticed in the Gotō school and continued to use some traditional Gotō subject matter after his independence, but he also borrowed the designs of popular artists. The repertoire of the town carvers thus broadened to include the purely Japanese themes, heroic stories, popular customs, humorous matter, and myths and legends found in printed book illustrations and on other miniature sculpture like lacquered *inrō* and *netsuke*. The Rinpa and Shijō schools of painting provided exciting designs. High-relief sculpture and inlay were sometimes decorated with several different colored metals, and pictures were virtually painted in metal. The technique of *katakiri bori* engraving was sometimes combined on the same piece with high-relief inlay to introduce further depths of perspective. In one pair of sword guards that shows a carp swimming upstream (cat. 71), the fish is in high-relief *shakudō* inlay, the stream is depicted using *katakiri bori*, and the ground metal is *shibuichi*, a vivid example of the combination of techniques and materials available to the town carvers.

One set consisting of a *kozuka* and a pair of *menuki* (cat. 68) is a masterful treatment of the theme of Niō temple guards. The two figures on the *menuki* are sculpted and inlaid with details in colored metals, while the figure on the *kozuka* is pinned to a *shakudō* ground. Sōmin enjoyed a close friendship with the versatile painter Hanabusa Itchō (see cats. 120, 241), who provided him with preparatory drawings for metalwork in the level Edo style. Another carver, Ichinomiya Nagatsune, specialized in high-relief colored metal inlay of the realistic paintings of Maruyama Ōkyo (see cat. 190) in whose work he found inspiration. The many pupils of Sōmin founded further schools of metalwork, such as the Ōmori and Yanagawa, as well as a derivative of the Yanagawa school, the Ōtsuki group (see cat. 65).

Tsuchiya Yasuchika (d. 1744), Sugiura Jōi (d. 1751), and Nara Toshinaga (d. 1737) of Edo are known as the three great metalworkers of the Nara school, and their work illustrates all of the subject matter of popular myth and legend. The standard established by these seventeenth- and eighteenth-century artisans was the basis for all later decorative Japanese metalwork. In addition to sword fittings, they made pouch clasps, *netsuke*, smoking pipes, and purely ornamental objects. Because metalworking skills were passed on over several generations, a substantial work force was ready to manufacture objects for export at the end of the Edo period after the Meiji Restoration.

One of the greatest of the last metalworkers was Gotō Ichijō (1791–1876), the seventeenth master of the Gotō school. Ichijō worked with the traditional *shakudō* and colored metal inlay of his ancestors but introduced an adventurous range of designs and themes. His work was greatly prized, with the imperial family ranking among his clients, and his skill brought him the high honorific rank of Hōgen in 1863. A matching pair of sword guards illustrating seasonal flowers in colored metal inlay on *shakudō* (cat. 73) are fine examples of Ichijō’s exquisite work.

cat. 71
Pair of sword guards with
design of carp, dated 1843,
shakudō, gold, and shibuichi,
7.9; 7.4 (3 1/8; 2 7/8) high,
Tokyo National Museum



cat. 73
Pair of sword guards with
flowers, plants, and insects,
dated 1857, shakudō,
copper, silver, and gold,
8; 7.5 (3 1/8; 2 7/8) high,
Tokyo National Museum



cat. 83
 Kusumi Morikage,
 Falconry Screens,
 late seventeenth century,
 pair of eight-panel screens;
 ink and color on paper,
 each 152.3 x 508.6 (60 x 200 1/4),
 Nitto Boseki Co., Ltd.,
 Tokyo





123

ARMS: THE BALANCE OF PEACE



MILITARY
TRAINING: THE
SWORD AND
THE BRUSH

The daimyo were required to maintain a state of perpetual military readiness, to which end they and their retainers had to train regularly. Thus each daimyo maintained training grounds for military operations, and in addition to purely military exercises, they encouraged falconry, boar hunting, and other field sports. A pair of eight-fold screens showing scenes of hunting cranes with falcons illustrates the large scale on which the activity was conducted (cat. 83). The first Tokugawa shogun, Ieyasu, was a keen hunter and excellent shot, and his presentation of a daylong game to the imperial household established a custom that lasted through most of the Edo period.

Archery, riding, swimming (including swimming in armor), gunnery, combat with pole-arms, swordplay, and unarmed combat schools developed along spiritual educational lines. Schools of kendo (the Way of the Sword) that claimed long ancestry, including branches of the Nenryū founded in the Kamakura period by the monk Jion, were at the heart of the several martial disciplines. The most competent swordsmen would be chosen from these schools to instruct the daimyo's retainers.

The two main schools of kendo throughout the Edo period were the Ono-ha-ittoryū and the Yagyūryū. Both provided kendo instructors for the shogun, but the Yagyū were also employed as an undercover intelligence service, which reported on the situation in the provinces. Yagyū Munenori (1571–1646) enjoyed the senior post of *Ometsuke* (literally “eye fixer”) to the third shogun, Iemitsu; he had responsibility for keeping the shogun informed of the loyalties and intentions of the daimyo.

The Confucian classics and calligraphy provided other important aspects of a samurai's education. His job was to know his duty and to enact it without regard for his own well-being, and being well-versed in the literature of loyalty was paramount. But over and above the military value of such activities, instruction in archery and swordplay in particular developed into spiritual studies rooted in Buddhist concepts of enlightenment. Because an advanced state of freedom from preoccupation with the self (*mushin* or *muga*) was a necessary goal for both swordsman and calligrapher, military training and literary studies were pursued with the same mental attitude. Other arts such as the tea ceremony, *nō* theater, flower arranging, and ink painting were similarly nurtured. Whereas in the West it is said that “the pen is mightier than the sword,” in Edo Japan the saying was “the brush and sword in accord.” The stability of the Edo period, and the time afforded for devotion to these refined pursuits, allowed many people to achieve high levels of enlightenment, just as the system of daimyo patronage enabled the retained craftsmen to acquire high levels of manufacturing competence.

During the early Edo period duels to the death were common among the *rōnin* or masterless samurai, anxious to make a name for themselves. One such roving swordsman, Miyamoto Musashi (1584–1645), killed sixty swordsmen before he was twenty-nine. His reputation was such that swordsmen from all over Japan sought him out to challenge him in combat, and his invincibility became the subject of popular lore. The nationalistic fervor of the Bakumatsu era brought heroic tales into vogue, and Musashi was credited with extraordinary powers and adventures like those of the great heroes of Japan's distant past. A triptych woodblock print by Utagawa Kuniyoshi (cat. 276) shows a fabulous act attributed to Musashi: he stands on the back of a giant whale, about to kill it with his sword. While all this was the stuff of fictional romance, Musashi was unbeaten in combat. He devoted himself to kendo study and eventually reached spiritual enlightenment. Thereafter he pursued more peaceful arts; his sculpture, painting, and calligraphy could be found in the collections of several daimyo. His ink paintings in particular reveal an unprecedented freshness and insight. In their transcendence over his terrible study of life and death, these works may be said to parallel the peace of the Tokugawa period, which relied on

the force of arms. Musashi's ink painting of the monk Hotei (cat. 84) shows two fighting cocks and the enlightened man looking on with a benign expression, much as the priestly Musashi himself must have looked back on his own violent past. In his last days Musashi enjoyed the hospitality and sponsorship of the Hosokawa daimyo, as later fencing masters were to obtain similar positions of trust with the feudal lords. Musashi was an individualist, but other swordsmen throughout the Edo period followed the constant, arduous fencing traditions laid down by their respective schools in pursuit of a similar state of invincibility and spiritual enlightenment.



cat. 84
Miyamoto Musashi,
Hotei and Fighting Cocks,
seventeenth century,
hanging scroll;
ink on paper,
71 x 32.7 (28 x 12⁷/₈),
Fukuoka Art Museum,
Important Art Object

Samurai: Catalogue 51 – 86



51
Portrait of Tokugawa Ieyasu

Early seventeenth century
Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk
82.9 x 41.3 (32⁵/₈ x 16¹/₄)
University Museum, Faculty of
Letters, Kyoto University

• At first glance, one would scarcely suspect that this stately portrait represents one of the shrewdest and most powerful generals in Japanese history — Tokugawa Ieyasu, the first shogun of the early modern period. The great warlord is shown in traditional courtier robes and cap rather than formal samurai costume or armor. He holds a ceremonial scepter, conventional in portraits of warriors, but the only indication of his samurai status is the long sword tucked into his robes. Such a portrait would normally have been commissioned exclusively for family members to use in memorial services for the deceased. But Ieyasu was widely venerated as the Buddhist-Shinto deity Tōshō Daigongen (Great Incarnation Illuminating the East), and images were made in great number throughout the Edo period based on portraits made immediately after his death in 1616. The altarlike curtains and raised platform with red lacquer pillars and guardian lion-dogs, reminiscent of a shrine setting, contribute to the aura of religiosity. The background landscape may be an imaginary early view of the shrine complex at Nikkō, the site of Ieyasu's mausoleum.

Ieyasu rose to power by defeating political rivals and building alliances at the battle of Sekigahara in 1600. At the decisive battle of Osaka Castle in 1615, he decimated the last vestiges of the Toyotomi clan's military power, an event many historians use to mark the beginning of the Edo period. The military government Ieyasu established in Edo, headed by fifteen successive generations of Tokugawa shogun, ruled Japan for the next two and a half centuries. VH



52
Armor made for Tokugawa Iemitsu
Seventeenth century
Iron, lacquer, leather, and silk
Height of cuirass 34.2 (13 1/2)
Kunōzan Tōshōgū Shrine, Shizuoka
Illustrated page 110

- This fine suit of armor was made for Iemitsu, grandson of the first Tokugawa shogun, who became shogun himself in 1623. The type is known as tōsei gusoku, literally “modern equipment,” which was the standard armor used during the sixteenth century. The cuirass wraps around the body and is tied closed on the right side. The cuirass, skirt, thigh guard, shoulder pieces, throat guard, and neck and shoulder guard attached to the helmet are all composed of lacquered iron plates tied together in rows joined with silk braid. Although lightweight, armor of this construction provided considerable protection against cutting weapons while allowing flexibility for the wearer. The helmet is composed of sixty-four vertical plates with protruding rivets that inspired

the name “star helmet” (hoshi kabuto). The austere appearance of this armor is indicative of the uncompromising spirit of military readiness that Ieyasu instilled in his successors. It was Iemitsu who finalized the isolation policy and instituted the system of alternate attendance for the daimyo. He also suppressed a rebellion by masterless samurai and Christians at Hara Castle on the Shimabara Peninsula in 1637, the last battle on Japanese soil until the fall of the shogunate in the nineteenth century. VH

53
Saddle and stirrups with tortoiseshell pattern
Eighteenth century
Saddle of lacquer over wood with takamakie
Stirrups of iron, lacquer over wood with takamakie
Height of saddle 33.3 (13 1/8)
Sendai City Museum, Miyagi

- All surfaces of the saddle and stirrups are decorated with a gold takamakie lacquer design of linked hexagonals representing tortoiseshell. This pattern signifies both longevity and the armorlike protection of the tortoise. Each hexagonal unit contains a stylized geometrical floral motif (hanabishi). At the center front of the pommel a peony is depicted so that its

petals resemble the carapace and claws of a crab (kanibotan). This motif was the crest of the Konoe clan, the most ancient house of the northern branch of the Fujiwara clan, established in the Heian period. During the Edo period the crest was better known for having been adopted by the kabuki actor Ichikawa Yaezō. VH

54
Saddle and stirrups with cosmetic brush design
Eighteenth century
Saddle of lacquer over wood with makie
Stirrups of iron, and lacquer over wood with makie
Height of saddle 38 (15)
Tokyo National Museum

Illustrated page 109

- The basic form of the Japanese saddle and stirrups changed little between the Heian and Edo periods. The saddle is composed of four pieces, the pommel, the cantle, and the two components that make up the seat. The pieces are tied together with cord, producing a structure that is highly resistant to shock. The configuration of the saddle allowed the rider to stand in the stirrups, gripping the saddle with his legs, in order to discharge arrows or wield his cutting weapons. Only the highest ranking samurai were permitted to keep riding horses during the Edo period, and their saddles and stirrups were often lavishly decorated, as these are. The stirrups are of iron with wooden inset bases. Both saddle and stirrups are lacquered with a design of white powder brushes. Rice powder (konuka) was the most common form of face powder, but for those who could afford the luxury, dried nightingale droppings were considered more elegant. Gold lacquer dust was applied in various thicknesses to the aventurine ground to give depth to the picture. VH

55
Helmet in the form of an upside-down bowl

1688
Iron and lacquer
Height of helmet bowl 19 (7 1/2)
Fukuoka City Museum

Illustrated page 112

• Taking the form of an inverted *gosu* food bowl, this helmet is lacquered with the shade of red often used for such wooden bowls. The visual pun derives from the fact that the crude helmets of the low-grade infantrymen (*ashigaru*) sometimes served as cooking vessels or containers for food and drink. This helmet is modeled on a silver-lacquered one owned by Kuroda Jōsui. An inscription tells that it was made by two armorers of the Haruta and Iwai families in 1688, for Kuroda Mitsuyuki (1628 – 1707). VH

56
Helmet

Iron, lacquer, boar hair, and silk
Height of helmet bowl 15.8 (6 1/4)
Tokyo National Museum

• The first helmet shown here is formed of a number of stout iron plates riveted together; it is covered with boar hair swept back and gathered into a small ponytail. Such examples are known as “uncouth fellow helmets” (*yarōtō*), and this piece with matching face mask certainly fits the name. The wild boar was a creature respected for its valor and ferocity, and the heart-shaped boar’s eye motif appears frequently on weapons and armor. The lacquered, sculpted wood in the form of a knotted rope around the head suggests a towel tied to keep

sweat from running into the eyes, which reinforces the impression that the helmet is the bare head of a wild man. Towels knotted thus in the front usually signify festivity, however, and when knotted at the back, war. Perhaps the implication is that the wearer, or indeed the armor itself, approached battle with relish. But the bizarre appearance of this helmet does not detract from its function. Of robust construction, with its four-tiered neck guard, mask, and throat guard, the helmet would have afforded effective protection. VH

57
Helmet with hollyhock crests

Iron and lacquer
Height of helmet bowl 23 (9)
National Museum of Japanese History, Chiba

• The bowl of the next helmet is of large iron plates riveted together in a form deriving from the European morion. Whereas the triple hollyhock device constituted the crest of the Tokugawa clan, two erect leaves, as on this helmet, were often used by the Honda family. The neck guard extends around the back of the helmet, ending with two small flaps at either side of the forehead, each of which bears a gold lacquered crest of the Nabe-shima clan. VH

58
Helmet with a butterfly crest

Iron, lacquer, and gold
Height of helmet bowl 26.5 (10 3/8)
National Museum of Japanese History, Chiba

• The third helmet pictured here has black-lacquered butterfly wings spreading to the left and right; an additional butterfly establishes the removable central crest. The butterfly might have been the clan crest of

the original owner. The iron bowl is formed of six plates riveted together in the so-called peach shape. The high visor and the flaps at the sides are worked in repoussé convolutions. It is likely that the rest of the armor was decorated with a matching design. In earlier periods the neck guard provided protection from arrows, but the piece became smaller (as seen here) when the matchlock gun replaced the bow in the second half of the sixteenth century. The only exception during the Edo period was on armor made for daimyo and their high-ranking samurai in the styles of the Heian and Kamakura periods. VH

59
Helmet with rabbit’s ears

Sixteenth century
Wood and/or papier-mâché, iron, lacquer, and silver foil
Height of helmet bowl 39.5 (15 1/2)
National Museum of Japanese History, Chiba

Illustrated page 112

• The rabbit’s ears on this helmet may have been made of a kind of papier-mâché and then applied to the iron bowl. The whole is covered with silver foil, and the interiors of the ears are lacquered black. The brow plate is hammered into wrinkles and eye-brows. Above it a crest in the form of a crescent moon is of leather with applied silver leaf. The shape perhaps playfully alludes to the folktale of the hare who lives on the moon and makes glutinous rice cake. VH



56



57



58

60

Jinbaori with drying nets

Eighteenth century

Wool and other textiles

90 x 96 (35³/₈ x 37³/₄)

Maeda Ikutokukai Foundation, Tokyo

• The earliest jinbaori (warrior surcoat) introduced in the Muromachi period were essentially functional. Wool was a favored material because of its warmth and ability to keep off the rain. This example displays an adventurous design of fishing nets hanging up to dry. The image is worked onto a vivid red wool body, while a white stylized cloud motif at the bottom provides a striking perspective. The interior is richly lined with brocaded silk. The owner of this surcoat, Maeda Harunaga (1745–1810), became the lord of Oyama Castle and governed Kaga, Noto, and Etchū provinces. In 1761 he entered the priesthood and was given the name Sen-shin (Clear Truth).

Because his elder brother, the lord of the domain, had no child, Harunaga returned to the secular world. Taking the name Riyu, he succeeded his brother in 1771 and sought to improve the affairs of the domain by setting up an education program that stressed fidelity and frugality. Harunaga invited the Confucian scholar Arai Hakuga to the domain and established the Meirindo school of literary studies and the Keibukan school of military arts to reinvigorate the concept of “the brush and the sword in accord” (*bunbu no itchi*). Harunaga also died without a direct heir, and he retired in 1802 in favor of an adopted son, Narinaga. VH



60



61



61

Jinbaori with red and white stripes

Eighteenth/nineteenth century

Wool and other textiles

101 x 55.8 (39³/₄ x 22)

Eisei Bunko Foundation, Tokyo

• This garment was owned by Hosokawa Narishige (1755–1835), the eighth lord of the Kumamoto domain in Higo province. He was the second son of the fifth lord of the Uji domain, Hosokawa Kobun. Kobun had been adopted as the successor to the seventh lord of Kumamoto, Harutoshi, after Harutoshi's children all died

young. Determined to alleviate the poor economic situation, he issued instructions to be frugal with food, drink, and clothing. He instituted a silver currency in place of rice payment and a system of local rents and taxes. The system proved unstable, however, and the economy was further damaged by a fire that destroyed the domain's mansion in Edo, forcing him into debt. He retired at the age of fifty-six, and his son Narishige succeeded him. VH

62

Jinbaori with mountain and pine bark design

Eighteenth century

Wool

104 x 47 (41 x 18¹/₂)

Kunōzan Tōshōgū Shrine, Shizuoka

• During the Edo period jinbaori such as this were decorated in striking patterns taken primarily from traditional textile designs, but on a larger scale to be recognizable and impressive from a distance. This coat, with its highly stylized black and white mountain and pine-bark lozenge motif, is said to have been owned by the sixth shogun, Tokugawa Ienobu, in office from 1709 to 1713. VH

63

Jinbaori with ship's sails

Eighteenth century

Wool and other textiles

85 x 100 (33¹/₂ x 39³/₈)

Maeda Ikutokukai Foundation, Tokyo

Illustrated page 115

• The jinbaori seems to have originated in European surcoats, and many of the early coats were clearly not purely Japanese in design and form. This jinbaori surcoat is of white wool with the design of a European ship's sails on the back, waves at the bottom, and a sawtooth motif bordering the sleeves. The shapes were cut out of the white cloth, and pieces of black, scarlet, yellow, and purple woolen cloth were inlaid so that the whole appears to be one piece with no visible joins or stitches.

This jinbaori was worn by Maeda Shigehiro, the eighth daimyo of the Maeda clan from 1729 to 1753. Throughout the Edo period the powerful Maeda clan ruled over Kaga, Noto, and Etchū provinces. Although they had been supporters of, and were related to, the rival Toyotomi family, they were a mainstay to the peace of Tokugawa Japan. They provided a model of a Confucian-based bureaucracy that had been promulgated by the daimyo Maeda Tsunanori (1643–1724). VH



64

64

Katana-type sword blade

Dated August 1677

Steel

Length 69.7 (27³/₈)

Tokyo National Museum

Important Art Object

• The *katana*-type sword blade is for the longer of the two swords that the samurai carried. This example has the shallow curve and the length seen in work of the last quarter of the seventeenth century, when the style of swords followed the dictates of formal exercises requiring large straightforward cuts. The fine forging grain and the bright crystalline structure of the hardened edge in the pattern of billowing waves (*hamon*) are characteristic of the work of Sukehiro (b. 1637) of Osaka. Exuberant *hamon* patterns were produced by a number of smiths in Osaka at the time, whereas the work of the smiths in Edo was more subdued. This contrast is thought to reflect the fact that Edo was largely populated by the warrior class, whereas Osaka had a sizable merchant population with a taste for luxury and the exotic.

Because only the samurai were permitted to carry a long sword, sword making declined more rapidly in Osaka toward the end of the seventeenth century. The billowing-waves *hamon* was produced by other Osaka smiths, including Sukehiro's pupil Sukenao, whose work can be easily mistaken for that of his teacher. VH

65

Pair of sword mountings

Wood, lacquer with makie, ray skin, and silk

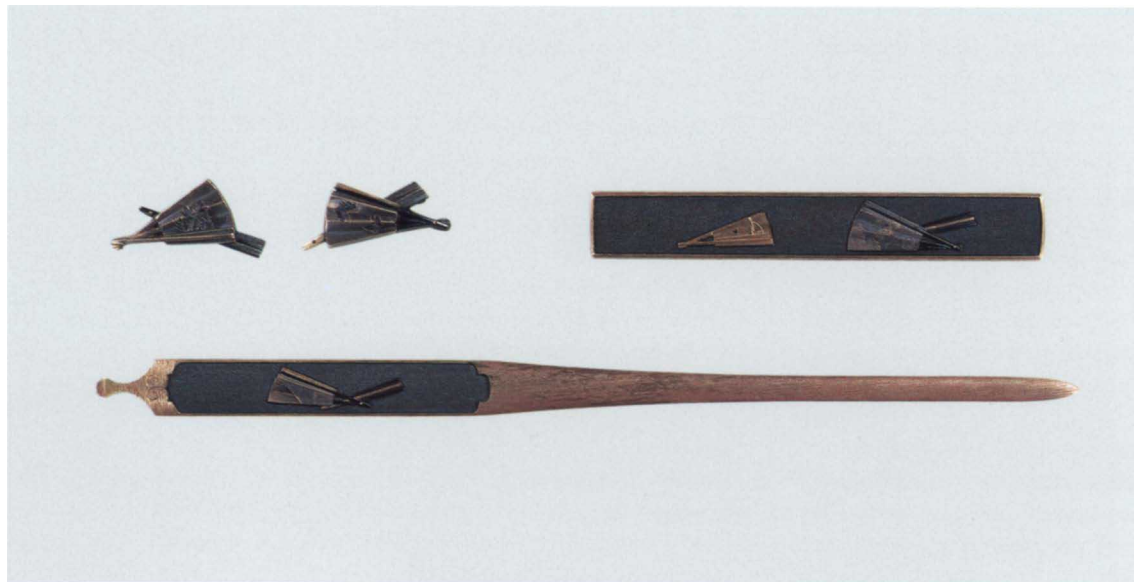
Length of short scabbard 76 (29⁷/₈);length of long scabbard 99.5 (39¹/₈)

Hikone Castle Museum, Shiga

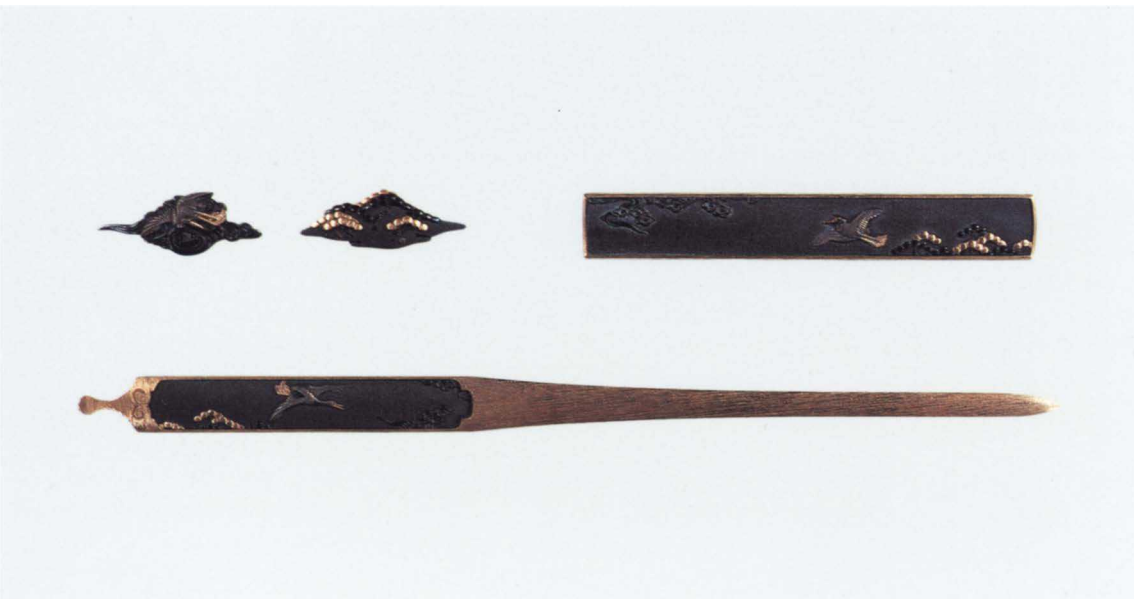
Illustrated page 118

• During the Edo period only the samurai were permitted to carry the long sword in addition to the shorter companion sword. For formal use when on duty in Edo, a matching pair with black scabbards was mandatory, but on other occasions more luxury could be enjoyed. This pair of sword mountings is ornamented with walnut shells set into the black lacquer of the magnolia scabbards and polished flat. The collar and pommel of the hilt are lacquered black and decorated with bird and flower designs in gold makie lacquer. Both swords were equipped with pockets in the scabbards to hold a *kozuka* hilt for a utility knife and a *kōgai*, or bodkin.

The *kozuka* and *kōgai* of this long sword have motifs of a dragon among waves and of sheep, sculpted in high relief on a gold ground. They are signed by Ōmori Teruhide (d. 1798). The *kozuka* and *kōgai* of the short sword have horses and dogs and are signed by Kikuoka Mitsuyuki (1750–1800). Teruhide was the son of Ōmori Terumasa (d. 1772), who had been taught by Yokoya Sōmin (1670–1733), the foremost of the first independent town carvers in the late seventeenth century. Mitsuyuki, the first of several generations of the Kikuoka school, studied under one of Sōmin's pupils, Yanagawa Naomitsu. VH



66



67

66

Set of sword accessories: Menuki, kozuka, and kōgai

Shakudō and colored metals
Length of kōgai 21.2 (8³/₈)
Tokyo National Museum

- This set of sword accessories is known as *mitokoromono*, literally “things of three places,” the “three places” being either side of the scabbard and the sides of the hilt. The *kozuka* (the rectangular object seen here) is the hilt for a knife blade, which was kept in a pocket at one side of the scabbard, with the end protruding slightly through a hole in the sword guard. These utility knives were used to cut paper, not as weapons. The two *menuki* hilt ornaments in the form of folding fans were bound on either side of the hilt in order to facilitate the hand’s grip. The *kōgai*, secured on the other side of the scabbard, could be used for dressing the hair and even as a hairpin. The turned-up lip on the end was used for cleaning the ears. VH

67

Set of sword accessories: Menuki, kozuka, and kōgai

Shakudō and colored metals
Length of kōgai 21.1 (8¹/₄)
Tokyo National Museum

- This set of *mitokoromono* is decorated with cranes flying among clouds and over pine trees inlaid in gold and colored metals on a ground of *shakudō*, a black alloy of copper containing a small percentage of gold. Cranes and pines are both auspicious symbols, and when taken together, they may allude to *Hōraizan*, the mythical Isle of the Immortals. VH



68

68

Sword accessories with Niō figures:
Kozuka and menuki

Early eighteenth century
Shakudō, copper, and gold (silver?)
Length of kozuka 9.8 (3⁷/₈)
Kyoto National Museum
Important Cultural Property

• The sword accessories known as *futatokoromono* (literally “things of two places”) consist of the *kozuka*, or hilt for a utility knife, and two *menuki* ornaments, which were fixed at each side of a sword hilt to aid the grip. The *futatokoromono* seen here are decorated with the Niō figures that guard the gates of Buddhist temples. The *menuki* were hammered out over forms of pitch, then sculpted and inlaid with colored metals. The figure on the *kozuka* was made in the same way, then pinned to a base of shakudō. The open-mouthed guardian, which represents the yang principle, was placed on the outer side of the hilt and was visible when the sword was worn. The closed-mouth figure, representing yin, was placed on the inside.

This set is signed “Sōmin.” The maker, Yokoya Sōmin, originally studied the Gotō style of clan carving under his father, Sōyō, who had been retained by the government to make sword fittings. Sōmin set up an independent studio and is recognized as the founding figure of the town carvers, depicting the old subjects with a fresh and fashionable approach and finding new subjects in popular art. Sōmin used the designs of painters such as Kano Tan'yū and Hanabusa Itchō, and is credited with the first use of oblique line engraving (*katakiri bori*), whereby brushstrokes could be simulated on metal. VH

69

Sword guard with grape arbor and
a squirrel

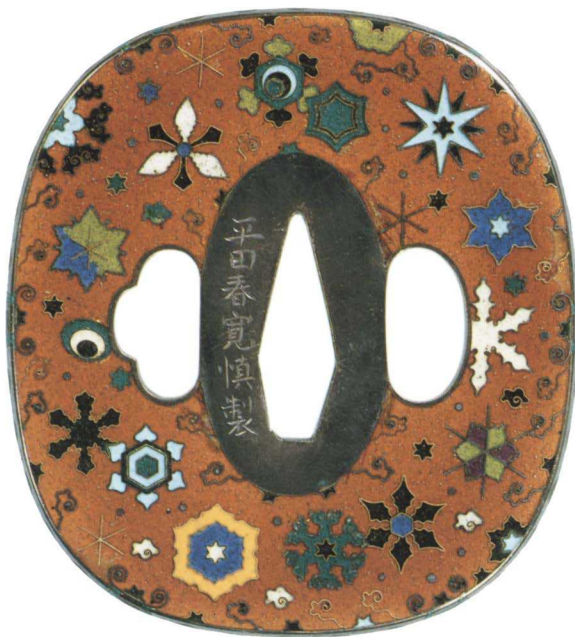
Eighteenth century
Brass, copper, and shakudō
Height 8.2 (3¹/₄)
Tokyo National Museum

• The ground of this sword guard is of *shinchū*, a form of brass, minutely hammered to resemble the surface of stone. The grapevine and squirrel motif was popular in various art forms and recurs particularly on iron sword guards of Nagato province (currently Yamaguchi Prefecture), where this piece was made. The inlays of brass, copper, and shakudō are patinated to a rich variety of colors, especially remarkable for what is metallurgically almost wholly copper. The use of brass as a base dates from the Muromachi period, when imported brass Chinese vessels (inscribed to the Xuande era, 1426–1435) were highly admired but Japanese metallurgists were not yet able to reproduce the alloy. During the Momoyama period brass was so prized that iron sword guards inlaid with the metal were for a time preferred to those using gold.

The inscription reads “Nagato Hagi ju Nakai Zensuke Tomotsune saku.” The maker, Zensuke Tomotsune, was the grandson of the first Tomotsune of Nagato (Chōshū province, present-day Yamaguchi Prefecture), who had come from the neighboring Suo province and was seventh generation of the known Nakai family. Zensuke was retained by the governing Mōri clan. He died about 1779 or 1780 in his middle eighties. VH



69



70

70
Sword guard with design of
snowflake patterns

Dated 1828
Silver and colored enamels
Height 7 (2 3/4)
Tokyo National Museum

- Stylized snowflakes in cloisonné enamels on a silver ground adorn this sword guard. The silver provides a reflective surface and gives an underlying brightness to the enameling. The inscribed phrase “Ōju Daiseiji kō” is translated “To the order of the Lord of Daiseiji.” The word *shinsei* in an inscription means “true manufacture,” implying that the smith had put all his effort into making the guard.

The sword guard is signed “Hirata Shunkan.” Nakamura Shunkan (active c. 1820s – 1830s) was a retained metalworker of the Daiseiji Maeda clan in Kaga province. He worked in both Kaga and Edo, where he studied under Hirata Shunshō (d. 1840), who was retained by the eighth Tokugawa shogun. Shunshō gave Shunkan the right to the name Hirata.

Until the mid-nineteenth century there were few makers of cloisonné in Japan, and the technique was limited to small items. It is said that the first generation of the Hirata family, Hirata Dōjin (1591 – 1646) — who had been retained by Toyotomi Hideyoshi and later Tokugawa Ieyasu — learned the technique from Korean craftsmen. VH

71
Pair of sword guards with design of carp

Dated 1843
Shakudō, gold, and shibuichi
Height 7.9; 7.4 (3 1/8; 2 7/8)
Tokyo National Museum

Illustrated page 121

- These sword guards are embellished with inlaid high-relief carp of the black alloy shakudō, which have details of gold. The ground is of polished shibuichi (literally “one part in four”), an alloy of silver that is one quarter copper. The stream is depicted with the *katakiri bori* technique, in which oblique cuts of the chisel suggest brush painting. *Katakiri bori* was popularized around the end of the seventeenth century by the town carvers, those craftsmen who were not retained by the warrior houses and who thus sold their works on the open market.

The maker of these sword guards, Ishiguro Masayoshi (b. 1764), was a pupil of Ishiguro Masatsune (1760 – 1828). Masatsune had studied under Yanagawa Naomasa (1692 – 1757), a pupil of the first town carver, Yokoya Sōmin. Masayoshi came to the attention of the Shimazu daimyo of Satsuma and was retained by him in Edo. The inscription “Juō Masayoshi,” meaning “Old Man Masayoshi,” indicates that he was in his sixtieth year, although he remained active in his late eighties. A symbol of energy, the carp was believed to swim upstream and eventually turn into a dragon. VH



72
Sword guard with horses

Dated June 1845
Silver
Height 8.3 (3 1/4)
Tokyo National Museum

• The carving of the horses in high relief on this silver sword guard is a further sophistication of the open-work guards of the early Edo period in which only a two-dimensional outline of the subject was cut through a plain metal sheet, usually of black-patinated iron. The guard is signed “Shiba Hōgen Takechika,” for the maker Yoshida Takechika (active mid-nineteenth century). Yoshida studied in Edo under Tsuchiya Masachika (d. 1860) from whom he derived one character of his name. Like Masachika, he was invested with the Buddhist

title “Hōgen” (the highest of three such honorifics) in respect for the excellence of his craft, and he inscribed the title with his name on this piece. Takechika worked in Kyoto but returned to his birthplace of Tottori in Inaba province in his advanced years. His teacher Masachika had the freedom to travel between Edo and Akita, where he was retained by the lord of that domain. Inscribed “made to the liking of Akita Kunitada” (“Akira Kunitada konomi [ni] yoru”), this guard was probably made by Takechika on commission for Kunitada of Akita under instructions from Masachika. VH

73

Pair of sword guards with flowers, plants, and insects

Dated 1857
Shakudō, copper, silver, and gold
Height 8; 7.5 (3 1/8, 2 7/8)
Tokyo National Museum

Illustrated page 121

• These sword guards for a matching pair of long and short swords are decorated with spring and autumn flowers, plants, and insects inlaid in colored metals on a shakudō ground. The ground is covered with a regular linear array of small raised protuberances known as nanako (fish roe), formed with a hollow-tipped punch; the flowers and insects are sculpted separately and set into sections cut below the surface.

The signature reads “Gotō Hōkkyō Ichijō,” and the inscription is “Tōfu [ni] oite tsukuru” (Made in the Eastern Capital [Edo]). Ichijō was the seventeenth generation of the Gotō family that began with Yūjō (1440–1512). The standard decorative themes of the Gotō school were bird, animal, and plant studies but especially Chinese subjects. Throughout the Edo period the family made fittings in a repetitive style for the Tokugawa clan, and branches of the family worked for daimyo in the provinces. They were also officials of the Tokugawa mint, and their seals and ink certifications are found on Edo-period gold *ōban* coins. The last active master of the school, Ichijō greatly expanded the subject matter beyond the traditional. He received the Buddhist title “Hōkkyō” (part of his signature here) in 1824, the year he created a mounting for Emperor Kokaku’s sword, made by the fourteenth-century master Masamune, the greatest of all Japanese swordsmiths. Ichijō was exalted to the higher rank of Hōgen in 1863, when he was again in Kyoto and made a mounting for Emperor Kōmei. VH



74

Helmet in the form of a turbo shell

Early seventeenth century

Iron, lacquer, paper, and gold leaf

Height of helmet bowl 18.6 (7 ³/₈)

Tokyo National Museum

• The helmet is basically a simple iron bowl on which paper (*washi*) is built up into the helical form of the turbo shell and covered with gold leaf. The shell of the turbo is thick and spiked to protect it against predators, and such helmets were thus thought to give the wearer confidence and disquiet his enemies. Despite its bulky appearance, the helmet is light and designed for use in battle. Helmets of such exotic form were fashionable during the latter part of the Muromachi and Momoyama periods, when an individual could rise in status through his own prowess in battle. VH



76

75
Helmet with symbolic tower

Eighteenth century
Iron, wood, and lacquer
Height of helmet bowl 16.9 (6⁵/₈)
Kyoto National Museum

Illustrated page 28

- This helmet is surmounted by a symbolic Buddhist tower, which is usually made of five parts to represent the five cosmic elements: earth, water, fire, wind, and nothingness or ultimate reality (*mu*). In Esoteric Buddhism three or five such forms may be related to the human body and are also used for tombstones.

This piece is inscribed “Namu Amida butsu,” the invocation of the Pure Land Buddhist sect, and it is pierced with a Sanskrit character. A crest with the Japanese character *tsuchi* (ground) appears on both sides. Although the tower appears unwieldy, it is a light construction of wood covered with a “corroded-effect” lacquer (*sabinuri*) with gold dust, and it would not be uncomfortable to wear. The helmet was made for a devout Buddhist, Matsudaira Sadamoto (1686–1759). VH

76
Helmet in a landscape form

Iron, lacquer, and silver leaf
Height of helmet bowl 34.3 (13¹/₂)
National Museum of Japanese History,
Chiba

- This extravagant helmet with two curved lateral pieces is in the form called *ninetani* (two valleys), alluding to an earlier helmet known as *ichinotani* (one valley). In 1184 the Genji clan won a victory over the Heike clan at Ichinotani, where the Heike were attacked from three sides. The most decisive action was an unexpected descent down a precipitous mountainside into the valley by Minamoto no Yoshitsune (1159–1189) and a force of local Genji warriors. An earlier version of the helmet, having a single large silvered section curved vertically with the hollow side forward, was owned by Kuroda Nagamasa (1568–1623), the lord of Chikuzen province, who wore it at the battle of Sekigahara in 1600. The helmet seen here is covered with silver leaf, which naturally tarnishes black. VH

77
Tsubaki Chinzan (1801–1854)
Portrait of Satō Issai

1841
Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk
124.2 x 54.5 (48⁷/₈ x 21¹/₂)
Tokyo National Museum

- The subject of this painting, Satō Issai (1772–1859), was a samurai of the Iwamura domain in Mino province. As a prominent scholar, he was appointed by the government to be a lecturer in the Shoheiko school of Confucian studies in 1841. The artist, Tsubaki Chinzan, a pupil of Watanabe Kazan (1793–1841), who specialized in both portraits and flower-and-bird paintings, was commissioned in 1851 to paint this portrait of Issai and another of his wife as a pair of hanging scrolls. The realism of the study makes this dignified portrait a worthy celebration of the subject’s seventieth year. VH

七十一香菊壇自題

七十一番菊地自題





78

Sword accessories with the zodiac:
Kōgai, kozuka, and menuki

Eighteenth century

Shakudō and gold

Length of kōgai 21.2 (8³/₈)

Tokyo National Museum

• This set of sword fittings depicts the twelve animals of the zodiac by which the year cycles and the hours of the day were indicated. The technique of pinning miniature pieces sculpted in gold onto a ground of black shakudō was established by the Gotō family in the fifteenth century. Gotō fittings were prescribed for use by the samurai when on duty in Edo, and many independent makers used their methods. This set departs from the standard designs of the Gotō family, and its maker is unknown. VH

79

Armor

Iron, lacquer, silk

Height of cuirass and skirt 69 (27¹/₈)

Tokyo National Museum

• This armor is of the type known as tōsei gusoku, or “modern equipment.” The armor is lightweight but covers most of the body. Components like the shoulder pieces and neck guard are smaller than on most armors created before the bow replaced the gun on the battlefield. The cuirass is made of rows of lacquered iron plates, linked together with silk braid, and consists of two halves that open on a hinge at the left side. The helmet is formed of lacquered iron plates and is of the high-sided Etchū province type. The gold lacquered crests at each temple are of ivy leaves in circular surrounds. The red discs that adorn the cuirass, shoulder pieces, and skirt probably represent the sun, which was later to become the emblem on the Japanese flag. Iron face masks served both to tie the helmet firmly on the head and to present a ferocious appearance. Usually the nose guard could be removed for comfort. A hole under the chin allowed sweat and breath condensation to drain away. VH



80
Niō cuirass armor

Iron, lacquer, silk, leather, and
boar hair (on helmet)
Height of cuirass and skirt 65.2 (25⁵/₈)
Tokyo National Museum

Illustrated page 113

- The Niō type of cuirass is named after the two bare-chested, exaggeratedly muscular guardian figures that stand on each side of a Buddhist temple’s gate. The cuirass of this armor is made of two substantial sheets of iron for the front and the back, shaped like a well-developed naked torso, with the ribs, breasts, and navel hammered into high relief.

Solid iron sheet was used in the second part of the sixteenth century in response to the introduction of the matchlock gun from Europe. Imported European cuirasses were sometimes adapted into Japanese armor at that time, and it may be that this grotesque form has its origin in similarly sculpted European armor. Few such sets survive, although there is a similar cuirass in the collection of Tokyo National Museum that has only half the chest exposed and the rest covered with the linked rows of iron plates of which Japanese armor is constructed.

Helmets of this type are made of three to five stout iron plates and covered with the hair of the wild boar. Both helmet and cuirass were designed to withstand gunfire. The rather coarse appearance of the whole armor and the red boar hair might have suggested the appearance of a foreigner to Japanese viewers of the time. VH

81
Armor with giant horns made
for Ii Naotaka

Seventeenth century
Iron, lacquer, silk, wood, leather,
and gold leaf
Height of cuirass and skirt 70 (27¹/₂)
Hikone Castle Museum, Shiga

- Composed of iron plates covered with thick red lacquer, the armor is laced together with smoke-tanned leather bindings. The suit is of the tōsei gusoku type, which was fashionable from the Muromachi period. The armor covers almost the whole body, but it is lightweight overall in keeping with the freedom of movement required.

Ii Naomasa (1521 – 1602), the first lord of the Hikone domain in Ōmi province, specified red armor for his entire clan. This set was made for Ii Naotaka (1590 – 1659), of the second generation. The cuirass is formed of two parts hinged at the left side and tied closed on the right. The helmet is of the type known as zunari, or “head-shaped,” and is composed of thin iron plates riveted together. The horns of wood covered with gold leaf were also introduced by Ii Naomasa, and remained in use up to the time of Naosuke, the thirteenth-generation lord of Hikone Castle. VH





82
Sword mounting with hollyhock crests

Eighteenth century
Lacquer on wood with makie, silk,
leather, gold, silver, and shakudō
Length 105.5 (41½)
Kunōzan Tōshōgū Shrine, Shizuoka

• This decorated sword mounting was commissioned by the eighth Tokugawa shogun, Yoshimune (1684-1751), and later donated to the Kunōzan Shrine. Fashioned from wood coated with makie lacquer, it is decorated with gold motifs of three hollyhock leaves (*mitsu-aoi*), the crest of the Tokugawa clan. The leather hilt cover is also lacquered and festooned with decorative fittings of precious metals.

Yoshimune, generally considered one of the most capable administrators among the fifteen Tokugawa shogun, is perhaps best remembered for his role in enacting the Kyōhō Reforms, which included sumptuary laws aimed at curbing the conspicuous consumption of wealthy merchants. Strict limitations were also placed on publications critical of the government and erotic literature deemed detrimental to the social fabric; print artists were forbidden to produce prints in deluxe formats. Reflecting his devotion to learning, however, Yoshimune recommended lifting the ban on imported books, which had far-reaching consequences for the development of western-influenced technology and art in Japan. He was also an ardent advocate of martial arts and was known to posterity as the “hawk shogun” in recognition of his frequent indulgence with the popular samurai pastime of falconry. VH

83
Kusumi Morikage (died c. 1688 – 1704)
Falconry Screens

Late seventeenth century
Pair of eight-panel screens; ink and
color on paper
Each 152.3 x 508.6 (60 x 200 ¼)
Nitto Boseki Co., Ltd., Tokyo

Illustrated on pages 122 – 123

• Falconry — the sport of hunting with falcons, hawks, or eagles — was officially patronized by the shogunate and widely practiced by daimyo in the provinces. Tokugawa Ieyasu was known as a dedicated falconer and still participated in hawking expeditions into his seventies. Although the shogunate had established an official post of Master Falconer, an official prohibition against hunting was enacted in 1684 by the devout Buddhist shogun Tsunayoshi (r. 1680 – 1709) — this screen probably shortly predates this prohibition. Falconry enjoyed an resurgence in popularity in the early eighteenth century during the rule of Yoshimune, the “hawk shogun.”

Falconry in Japan relied almost exclusively on short-winged hawks (*goshawks*), which were well suited to the mountainous and densely wooded topography of Japan. The best were imported from Korea. These screens show falconers hunting fowl of every variety, including pheasants, egrets, ducks, heron, geese, and the most prized and difficult catch of all — cranes. High-ranking samurai (in formal attire) with their falconers (donning hoods and gloves) are accompanied by a large contingent of beaters, who handled the dogs and helped flush out quarry so the flying hawks could pursue their prey. VH

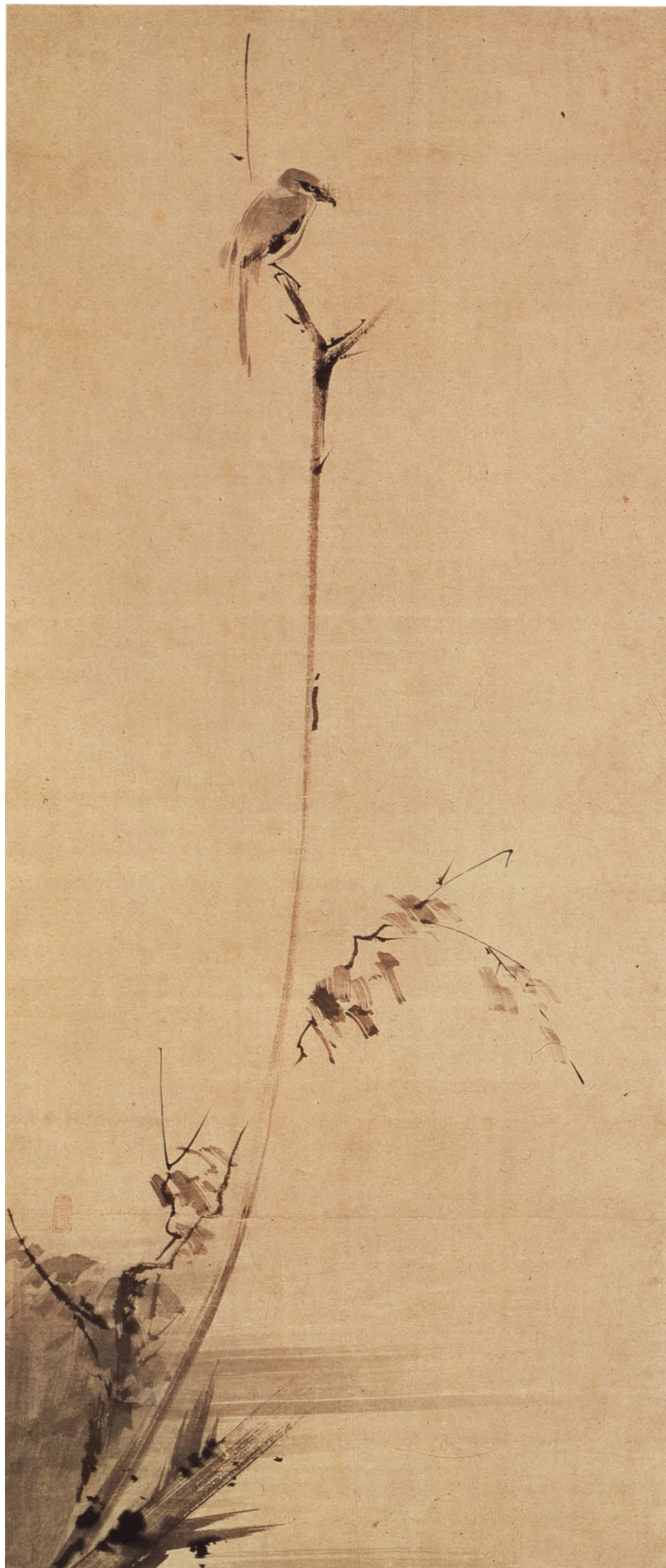
84
Miyamoto Musashi (1584 – 1645)
Hotei and Fighting Cocks

Seventeenth century
Hanging scroll; ink on paper
71 x 32.7 (28 x 12 7/8)
Fukuoka Art Museum
Important Art Object

Illustrated on page 125

• The legends of Hotei, one of the Edo period's seven gods of good fortune, are based on the life of a Buddhist sage who lived in China during the late ninth and early tenth centuries. A popular painting subject in China and Japan, Hotei usually appears as a mirthful monk with a huge stomach and a cloth sack (the literal meaning of his name) containing all of his worldly possessions. Here Hotei rests his chin on a walking stick and peers bemusedly at a cock fight. Both the subject and style of the painting effectively capture the dual aspect of the artist Miyamoto Musashi's career: the battling cocks symbolize the warrior spirit of the legendary swordsman, while the spontaneous but energetic brushwork reveals the aesthetic priorities of a man trained in Zen asceticism.

The artist's red rectangular seal in the lower left corner — with his art name Niten, literally “Two Heavens” — provides a colorful counterpoint to the monochrome composition. VH



85

Miyamoto Musashi (1584 – 1645)

Shrike

Hanging scroll; ink on paper

126.2 x 54.6 (49⁵/₈ x 12⁷/₈)

Kuboso Memorial Museum of Arts,
Izumi, Osaka

Important Cultural Property

- Miyamoto Musashi was in his prime when Tokugawa Ieyasu established his government at Edo. As one of the early Edo-period *rōnin*, or masterless samurai, he lived a violent life devoted to the practice of kendo, the Way of the Sword. His treatise on swordplay *A Book of Five Rings* (*Go rin no sho*), written just one week before his death in 1645, states that he had killed sixty swordsmen in single combat by the time he was twenty-nine. Realizing that he was invincible, he used only wooden swords from then on, as he roamed Japan in a quest for understanding. At about the age of fifty he became enlightened, and of the years after that he said, “Since then I have lived without following any particular Way. Thus with the virtue of strategy I practice many arts and abilities — all things with no teacher.”

Musashi, who used a seal inscribed “Niten,” produced wooden sculpture, metalwork, paintings, and calligraphy, all in a distinctive style. His masterful ink painting has been compared with the best Chinese southern Song-period work, but his treatment of even standard Buddhist themes declares his absolute individuality.

This is perhaps the best known of all Musashi’s paintings. The shrike appears to rest nonchalantly, but a second glance shows that he sits back to maintain the branch in a tense curve along which a caterpillar approaches. Our attention shifts from the foliage in the lower corner to the bird and then to what is not immediately evident: the shrike’s prey. We are invited to consider how the world of the shrike transcends that of the caterpillar in an allusion to the stages of Buddhist enlightenment. VH



86

Dog-Chasing Game

Seventeenth century

Pair of six-panel screens; color and gold on paper

Each 129 x 349.5 (50³/₄ x 137⁵/₈)

The Hosomi Art Foundation, Osaka

Important Art Object

• The origins of the dog-chasing game, like other methods of training the mounted archer, lie in the warrior code established during the Kamakura period. Minamoto no Yoritomo (1147 – 1199), who set up the first shogunate on which the Tokugawa rule was based, had achieved his military successes largely through doing away with infantry and relying on smaller groups of well-armed cavalry. The game, which had enjoyed popularity during the mid-Muromachi period, was revived around the middle of the seventeenth century by the Shimazu clan of Satsuma province, no doubt as a result of the government's requirement that each province be in a state of constant military readiness.

The game is played by releasing dogs into the center of two concentric rope circles laid on the ground, while the riders wait outside the outer circle. The participants then try to shoot the animals with large round-headed arrows that did not cause injury. Extant paintings of the game dating from the Muromachi period serve as instruction manuals, but works like this pair of screens celebrate the festival nature of the event. Sight-seers and official viewing stands are depicted. One screen indicates the preparation for the event, and the other shows the game underway as the riders chase through the grounds of the daimyo's mansion. VH



Ornament • Samurai • Work • Religion and Festivals • Travel, Landscape, and Nature • Entertainment



Images of peasants and workers

Workers of

Edo: Ambiance,

Archetype,

or Individual

in the Edo period could be humorous, didactic, sympathetic, idealized, or derisive. The thorough, sometimes encyclopedic, depictions of work by artists of the period sprang from the long history of this theme in Japanese art and were fostered by clearer definitions of the place of the worker in society.

HOLLIS GOODALL

The theme of artisans and farmers first drew the attention of the art patron class, the nobility, during the Heian period (794 – 1185). Farmers began to use the off-season to produce linens, lacquer, indigo, or other luxury goods desired by the aristocrats.¹ The laboring farmer or fisherman appeared as narrative details in paintings of famous places (*meishoe*), in images of the seasons (*shikie*), and in depictions of monthly ceremonies (*tsukinamie*) — the three central themes of paintings found in Heian aristocratic residences. Like waka poets, the artists of the period strove to capture a sympathetic alliance between people and their natural surroundings. The anecdotal detail of laborers at work suggests the nature of daily life at the time, but these painted screens were primarily meant to evoke a particular time of year (fig. 1).²

Farmers shown in a Shinto mandala work near a shrine dedicated to the god of rice, thereby serving as didactic examples of the efficacy of prayer. Townspeople, merchants, and beggars appear in narrative handscrolls, most notably the *Pictorial Biography of the Monk Ippen* of 1299, enhancing the realism of the narrative and serving as an audience for



the action. Carpenters, painters, and plasterers are depicted in scrolls that show the building of temples and shrines, but these figures are still subordinate to the overall narrative.

The worker as a theme in its own right first appeared at the end of the Kamakura period (1185 – 1333) in paintings of Poetic Contests Between Workers. This motif was an extension of the well-established painting genre Poetic Contests Between the Thirty-six Immortal Poets. Both types of painting are rooted in waka poetry: the Thirty-six Immortals were the authors of the poems, and sometimes workers and the sight or sound of their labor were the subject of a poem. As artisans and merchants gained power and influence, especially when commerce flourished in the Muromachi period (1392 – 1573), both poets and painters gave more and more attention to the activities of these working classes. Some paintings of imaginary poetry contests between workers might have been created to amuse aristocrats at parties; others might have been dedicated to the Buddha — as were waka — on behalf of laborers by their noble patrons.³

The earliest dated scroll of the Poetic Contests Between Workers theme is the Tōhoku'in Poetic Contest scroll (fig. 2). Dating to 1214, it is one of two examples from the Kamakura period; more scrolls on the subject date from the Muromachi to the early Edo period. These include as town workers not only those engaged in handicrafts but also spiritual mediums, physicians, itinerant monks, jugglers, and prostitutes. Each worker is identified either by a cursory setting or by the tools and products of his or her trade, identifications clarified by the accompanying labels. The subjects are squeezed between poetic text and thus are extremely simplified. The worker is portrayed as an easily discernible symbol of a profession.

The next phase of portraying workers is seen in Muromachi-period screen paintings known as Scenes In and Around Kyoto (*rakuchū-rakugaizu*), a subgenre of paintings of famous places. In the first half of the sixteenth century paintings of famous scenes around Kyoto, then the capital, were developed for the samurai and aristocracy to affirm their power as well as to decorate their houses. In the earliest prototypes the scenes emphasized are of the imperial palace and the residences of the Ashikaga shogun and the Hosokawa family, governors-general of Kyoto — the triumvirate of governing forces in Kyoto at the time. Among these residences are scattered images of the famous temples, shrines, locales, and spectacles in the city. These screens, in their unromanticized, realistic depiction of the city's inhabitants, served as a precursor for true genre painting, which developed in the Momoyama period (1573 – 1615), and for genre painting's descendants in *ukiyo*.

fig. 1
Beach and Pine,
mid-sixteenth century,
detail from a pair of
six-panel screens,
ink, color, and gold
on paper with cut silver
and gold leaf,
each 106 x 312.5 (41 3/4 x 123),
Tokyo National Museum

fig. 2
*Tōhoku'in Poetic Contests
Between Workers* (detail: gambler
and spiritual medium),
dated 1214, handscroll;
ink and light color on paper,
79 (31 1/8) high,
Tokyo National Museum

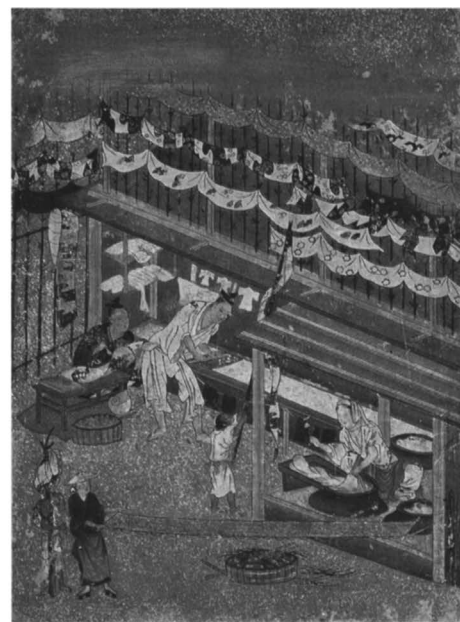
The Scenes In and Around Kyoto screens were the first to display analytically the lives and work of the townspeople, shown lining the streets of the city. For the first time the viewer can look into shops and observe streets and bridges to witness the living conditions and working methods of a wide array of artisans and itinerant workers (fig. 3). A study of these screens reveals that the role and status of individuals within the community of urban workers were already defined in the Muromachi period. Those whose work most benefited the samurai class — the armorers, bow makers, leather workers, furriers, and swordsmiths — were allowed to live and work in elaborate buildings with tile roofs. Further down the hierarchy of urban workers, the carpenters, plasterers, textile workers, lacquerers, and other producers of luxury goods were still well situated, though in houses of simpler design. Street vendors such as peddlers, entertainers, and bamboo vendors were distinctly disadvantaged. In these screens representations of women are much reduced compared with earlier paintings of workers.

Role and status became more highly ramified in society and art during the early Edo period. The artists' systematic approach to the Scenes In and Around Kyoto began a trend to depict accurately and thoroughly the circumstances of the city and its inhabitants. This method of categorizing and documenting the sights was part of another trend that gained momentum at the beginning of the Edo period. The coexistence of the two themes of Poetic Contests Between Workers and Scenes In and Around Kyoto led to the development of a new subject — found mostly in screen painting but also in some scrolls — called Pictures of All the Workers (*shokunin zukushie*) (fig. 4). These screen paintings, which portray shop masters plying their trades in their urban stores, show the circumstances of the manual worker with much greater emphasis and detail than before.

The system of social organization devised in the Muromachi period following the Ōnin War (1467–1477) was based on hereditary occupations and household members working together. This system is visible in the screens' representations of the workers' abodes: each member of a family performs a specific role.⁴ Approximately half of the shops are angled to the right, the other half to the left, as if facing off in a competition. Each panel of the screens features a shop and its inhabitants, shown in separate scenes pasted onto the screen panels. Gold clouds act as framing devices for each craftsman's

fig. 3
Scenes In and Around Kyoto,
early seventeenth century,
detail from a pair
of six-panel screens; ink, color,
and gold on paper,
each 106 x 340 (41 3/4 x 133 7/8),
Tokyo National Museum

fig. 4
Attributed to Kano Yoshinobu,
Pictures of All the Workers,
detail from
a pair of six-panel screens;
ink and color on paper,
each 58 x 43.7 (22 7/8 x 17 1/4),
Kita'in, Kawagoe City,
Saitama



A CHANGED
CLASS
STRUCTURE

dwelling. The viewer can see into every shop and study the assortment of tools and variety of products being created, as well as discern the disposition of the shop’s employees.

Professions other than the manual crafts disappeared for as long as this type of screen remained popular, during the Momoyama and into the early Edo period. The spiritual mediums and entertainers found in the poetic contest scrolls were replaced by fan makers, carpenters, weavers, carvers of Buddhist sculpture, and swordsmiths, among a host of others.

The changing political and social situation in sixteenth-century Japan set the stage for the Edo-period artists’ increasing focus on urban, and then rural, workers. In the long-existing structure of society the hereditary warrior class and the nobility held the predominant positions as governors and arbiters of high culture. During the late Muromachi and the Momoyama periods commerce increased, along with overseas trade, allowing wealth to accumulate for the first time in the hands of lower-class producers. Benefiting from this newfound wealth, the lower classes were able to influence the directions that high culture would take.

After the hundred years of political and social chaos at the end of the Muromachi period, called the Age of the Country at War (1467 – 1568), Japan began to rebuild, starting with samurai castles. Around these castles new towns were built, forming the nucleus of the urban culture that attained such importance during the Edo period.⁵ The popular stone-pulling designs, images of great foundation stones being moved (cat. 87), illustrate the ideal of a country reconstructing itself in peacetime. Nakai Nobuhiko discusses the folklore that grew around castle building after many peasants were drafted to toil, and sometimes die, on the huge projects.⁶ Much of Kyoto’s repair was accomplished through the efforts of the merchant class, and the Scenes In and Around Kyoto screens may reflect the satisfaction of watching the old capital being rebuilt. Kyoto was still best known as the place to have fun, visit antique stores, tour famous places, watch performances, and shop for anything desired.⁷ Other cities shown in paintings of the Pictures of All the Workers theme could represent castle towns — which were new centers for commerce — such as the new capital of Edo, or the old mercantile centers Sakai and Osaka.⁸

Following the time of political chaos Japan was reorganized by Oda Nobunaga (1534 – 1582) and Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536 – 1598), whom Herman Ooms identifies in his essay as the preeminent daimyo. These military leaders placed the Confucian system at the core of their governing philosophy. The shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542 – 1616) and his followers further solidified the four-class structure of samurai, farmers, artisans, and merchants. With the advent of the Edo period government mandate rearranged society to forestall organized rebellion, separating samurai from the land and isolating them from peasants. The samurai’s role evolved further into that of civil bureaucrat, policeman, and warrior (as needed for defense); he was dependent on the fief lord, or daimyo, for a stipend.⁹ From this time the farmer lived under the protection of a samurai overlord but was in control of the land that he worked. Farmers, the second highest class, supported the economy of the country by producing rice, with which the shogunate paid its fief lords. Farmers composed the vast majority of the population and often lived in poverty.¹⁰

Artisans and merchants, the third and fourth classes, respectively, served the samurai from their shops in the castle towns and eventually dominated the class of townspeople (*chōnin*).¹¹ In time the shogunate’s systems for controlling feudal lords (most notably the fixed stipends for samurai

cat. 87

Tray with scene of men
pulling a foundation stone,
seventeenth century,
lacquer on wood with makie,
32.7 x 51.8 x 3.5
(12⁷/₈ x 20³/₈ x 1³/₈),
Tokyo National Museum



and the alternate attendance that required daimyo to spend time in Edo) resulted in money passing from the warrior class into the hands of lower-class merchants and artisans. Therefore, those with the least political authority came to control much of the country's wealth. The new power held by this group of sellers — who were also consumers — is evidenced by their increasing importance as a theme in art, demonstrated with greatest efficacy in *Pictures of All the Workers*.

THE WORKER'S ROLE IN SOCIETY AND ART

The Edo government's Confucian-oriented accentuation of the specific roles of people within society stimulated the creation of art on the theme of the worker. The changed role of the samurai as administrator engendered a new emphasis on a person's specific function in society, a concept that trickled down through the various classes.¹² Because each member of each class participated in sustaining Japan and its people, the dignity of work was stressed. In turn, each type of work became a path for study and in many cases for secret transmission of information from master to apprentice.¹³ The large number of paintings of merchants and farmers hints at the new cultural and social influence of the working classes.

The new order of Japanese society had the subsidiary effect of promoting workers as an idea in art, making them a symbol of prosperity, an archetype of peaceful living, and an emblem of a country rebuilding after a century of war. Silk workers were recognized as symbols of industry and rice farmers as the individuals without whose work the economy would collapse, because rice was used to pay the samurai and eventually replaced millet as the food for the general populace. Those with disposable income — merchants and artisans — were identified not only as creators, builders, and distributors but as consumers and tastemakers.

cat. 88
*Occupations and Activities
 of Each Month,*
 mid-eighteenth century,
 pair of six-panel screens;
 ink, color, and gold on paper,
 each 79.4 x 235.8 (31 ¹/₄ x 92 ⁷/₈),
 The Sakai Museum, Osaka





Roles for workers expanded manyfold in the late Muromachi and the Momoyama periods, and the division of labor developed further with huge commercial gains in the second half of the seventeenth century.¹⁴ A new interest in scientific inquiry and analysis followed the spread of academies and a publication boom in the seventeenth century, and taxology became a craze in the eighteenth century. Perhaps influenced by these developments, some painters revealed an extremely close, systematic observation of all subjects, including workers.¹⁵ The *Occupations and Activities of Each Month* screen (cat. 88) shows the exhaustive level of scrutiny that a mid-eighteenth-century town painter would devote to the subject of the urban worker. This pair of half-sized screens depicts about 975 people: 124 merchants; 80 artisans; 68 street vendors, fortune-tellers, and entertainers; 50 samurai; 24 itinerant monks; and a wide assortment of men, women, and children shopping, performing, frolicking, or celebrating the events of the year. Animals and birds of a great variety are also shown. Virtually every product from lotus leaves to loquats is being sold; every kind of handcrafted item from fans to footwear is being created before our eyes.¹⁶ This painting is exceptionally rare for its inclusion of monthly events — such as selling pines at the New Year and dolls in the third month and the Buddhist *nenbutsu* dance in the seventh month — shown in a complex scene of tradespeople at work. The one factor in this comprehensive treatment that remains vague is the location. The town exhibits none of the defining characteristics of a specific place.

The interest of Edo-period artists in handicraft manufacture and other types of work extended to understanding and illustrating the tools, methods, and settings for every step in the process of creation. Woodblock print book illustrations of the time provided such information, which found its way onto three-dimensional decorative objects. A Nabeshima dish from the early nineteenth century (cat. 89) shows workers digging and filtering clay, then shaping, firing, and decorating vessels, and finally selling the finished porcelain product.

FARMING AND
PEASANTRY:
FROM CONFUCIAN
THEME TO
GENRE SCENES

The Confucian construct for society promulgated by the shogunate was reflected in officially sanctioned art themes. The overarching concept of Confucianism deemed that a peaceful and prosperous state could be achieved when benevolent leadership from above was combined with cooperative, respectful support from the lower echelons. In this system farmers would feed the people, artisans create essentials for living, merchants transfer goods between producers and consumers — and everyone worked to sustain the administrators who led and protected them. Success hinged on a clear understanding and respect for hierarchy, not only among the four classes but within each class, community, and family.

The painting theme of Rice Cultivation in the Four Seasons was the ideal didactic Confucian subject. This motif, along with that of sericulture (raising silkworms to produce raw silk), was judged appropriate for temples as well as for meeting halls in a samurai or daimyo residence where the guardians of the land would hold audiences with their subjects. In China the stages of cultivating rice through the year had been painted as a Confucian theme since at least the thirteenth century, with the purpose of enhancing respect for and encouraging the peasants whose difficult labors supported the populace. Chinese paintings and woodblock print books illustrating rice cultivation and sericulture were imported into Japan. A handscroll attributed to the Chinese artist Liang Kai (active early thirteenth century) was copied by Sōami (1485? – 1525), whose version in turn formed the basis for the first



fig. 5
Writing-paper box with rice
transplanting design,
seventeenth century,
gold lacquer on wood with
mother-of-pearl inlay,
14 x 33 x 40.6 (5 1/2 x 13 x 16),
Los Angeles County
Museum of Art, Gift of the
1988 Collectors Committee

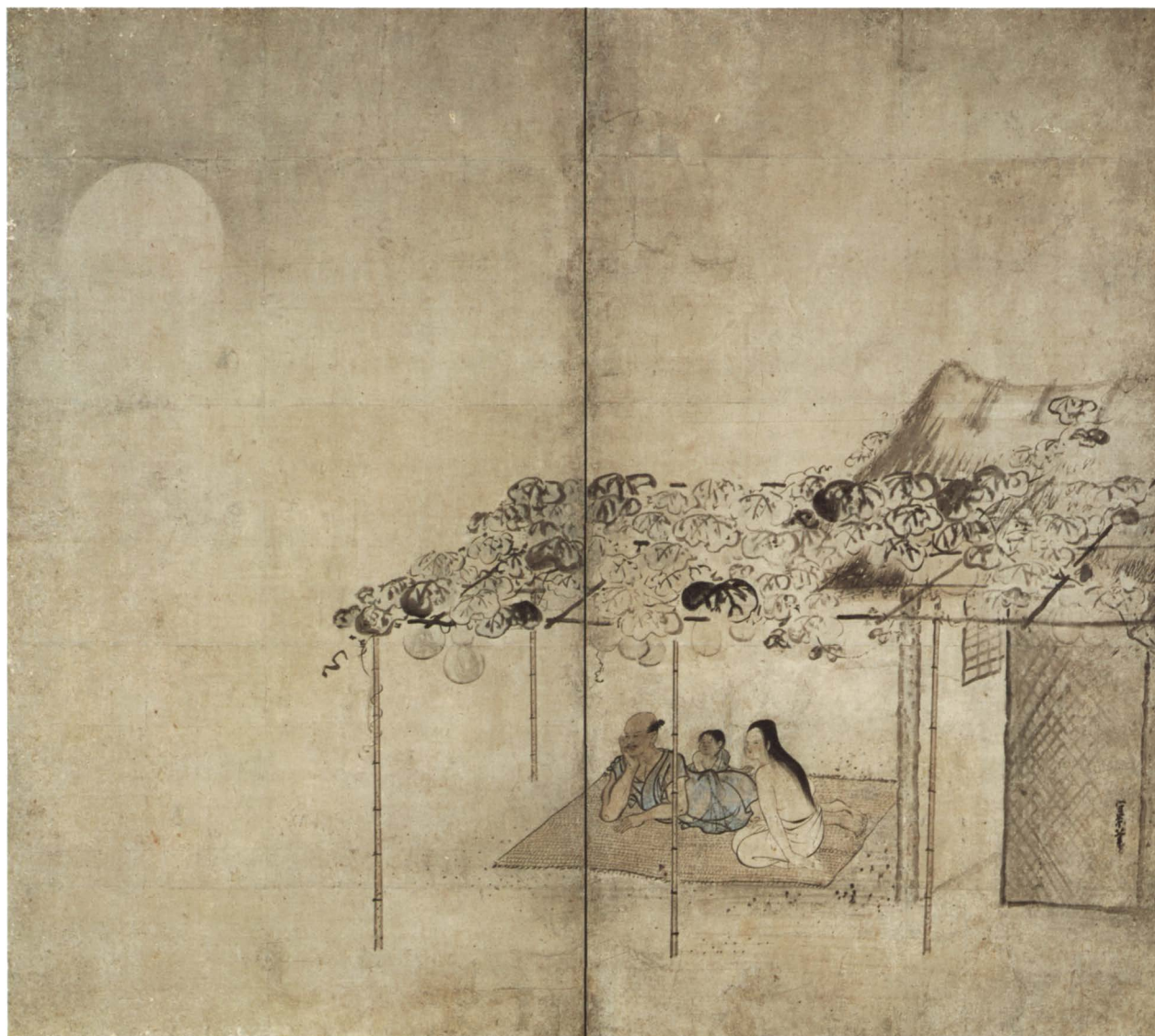
major painting on the theme of rice cultivation as room decor, sliding panels attributed to Kano Yukinobu (1513? – 1575).¹⁷ This painting by Yukinobu at the Daitokuji subtemple Daisen'in in Kyoto, was a model for generations of Kano-school artists who reworked and reinterpreted the subject dozens of times for samurai residences and temples all over the country.¹⁸ The predominant approach for painting rice cultivation and sericulture was a Chinese style of painting, *Kanga*, that employed borrowed Chinese motifs, painting mannerisms, and building and costume types. Generations of artists who wished to experiment with the rice cultivation theme found appropriate models in copy books drawn from paintings by early Edo-period Kano masters.

The rice cultivation theme also has a Japanese precedent. Rice transplantation, which takes place in the fifth lunar month, had long been a favored topic in paintings of the ceremonies of each month (*tsukinamie*), always rendered in the centuries-old *Yamatoe*, or native Japanese, style of painting (fig. 5). The *Yamatoe* versions are distinguished by the Japanese manner of dress; the low, rolling landscape native to Japan; and frequently by inclusion of *dengaku* dancers, who kept rhythm for the women as they set seedlings into the paddies.

One renegade artist, Kusumi Morikage (c. 1620 – c. 1690), was the first to take exception to the Chinese-based treatment of seasonal rice cultivation common to academic paintings, although he had rendered a number of standard *Kanga*-style screens on the subject during his career.¹⁹ Late in life Morikage was disgraced and expelled from the main Kano school in Edo, whereupon he went to work in Kaga for the Maeda clan. In Kaga from 1673 to 1681 Morikage witnessed the effects of the recent removal of samurai from the land. Their longing for the past mirrored his own regrets for a lost home. In reaction, he developed a new style of painting farming scenes, based in part on *Yamatoe* style and in part on direct observation of the workers on the land. His sympathetic views of the peasants and samurai moving about their homes, working or playing in the fields, and transplanting rice to the rhythmic dancing and singing of *dengaku* are unprecedented in their realism and warm tributes to the rustic subject. In contrast to *Kanga*-style treatments of Rice Cultivation in the Four Seasons, depicting little beyond the activities involved in agriculture, Morikage's paintings (cat. 91) take a broader view. In one screen a woman travels on horseback, a man begins to pull his sword on a dog, another man leads a bullock, and youths relax and wrestle. These images, which extend the length of the screen, are given emphasis equal to the scenes of farmers engaged in growing and harvesting rice. The farming images do not fit into the organized pockets of orchestrated action found in a *Kanga*-style screen, whose subjects are copied from books. Rather, the scenes are spread organically across a low, open plain, the seasons evolving seamlessly from left to right. (Morikage's occasional perversion was to arrange his paintings in reverse of the usual right-to-left progression.)

Morikage's most famous work, *Enjoying the Evening Cool under an Arbor* (cat. 90), transfixes us with its poetic quality. In this utterly unpretentious portrait of familial bliss, a peasant father, mother, and child rest under an arbor covered with a gourd vine, enjoying the cool setting on a humid moonlit night. The gourd-covered vine and moonlight are seasonal references to late summer and early fall.

This painting suggests the profound within the mundane, a feature treasured in haiku by poet Matsuo Bashō (1644 – 1694), Morikage's contemporary. The square format and repeated angles of the hut play against the round form of the moon, while the hard and bonelike outlines of the male figure contrast with the supple and fluid contours of the female and child. The gourds splayed across the roof are painted clearly or roughly, and consequently seem to move in and out of focus, enhancing the sense of



cat. 90
Kusumi Morikage,
*Enjoying the Evening Cool
under an Arbor*,
two-panel screen; ink and
light color on paper,
149.1 x 165 (58³/₄ x 65),
Tokyo National Museum,
National Treasure

enveloping misty moonlight. The extreme difficulty of these farmers' lives, indicated by their rude hut, exists within the painting as a separate statement at a great psychic distance from their pure enjoyment of the moment. Morikage's work in this vein broke completely from the past and became a model for such artists as Hanabusa Itchō (1652–1724), who in turn would serve as inspiration for the ukiyoe artist Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849).

The artist Watanabe Shikō (1683–1755) looked to Morikage for inspiration in his painting *Rice Cultivation in the Four Seasons* (compare cats. 91 and 92). Abjuring the usual Kanga-style rote treatment of prescribed themes, he instead transformed the painting into a stage for explicating the life circumstances of the peasantry. Shikō laid out his lateral composition of a farming village like a bird's-eye-view map, clearly showing the structure and function of each residence and the relationship of one dwelling to the next. The attention to spatial layout, and to details of the figures and implements of rice cultivation, exposes a finely developed empirical method. This analytical approach would become more fashionable as the eighteenth century progressed. Compositions like *Rice Cultivation in the Four Seasons*

established Shikō as a precursor to the painting-from-life school (*shaseiga*) of Kyoto, which developed under the direction of Maruyama Ōkyo (1733–1795) at the end of the eighteenth century. The narrative activities within the village seem to bear only a passing relationship to the Confucian theme of rice growing; they instead give the impression that Shikō visited the village, observed and drew life there, and composed what he saw into an artwork. Kimura Shigekazu speculates that Shikō must have gone from his home in Kyoto to nearby farms and sketched over the course of a year to gather material for these screens.²⁰ While maintaining the naturalistic, atmospheric, and almost momentary appearance of the scene, Shikō managed to fit in both the rice-growing tasks of the four seasons and a variety of seasonal genre elements, such as the New Year's *daikagura* music and dance performance seen in the large farmyard in the right screen.

Having trained first in the Kano school, Shikō knew the officially sanctioned methods of Kanga-style one-corner composition, which called for building a landscape from both ends of a screen. Hard black outlines and texture strokes based on calligraphic technique were at the core of Kano training. After studying with a Kano-school artist, Shikō purportedly became a follower of Ogata Kōrin (1658–1716), the great master of the Rinpa school. Shikō probably rendered his *Rice Cultivation in the Four Seasons* near the end of his career, after he had absorbed and synthesized his training in both Kano techniques and Rinpa manners.

Shikō had made a thorough study of the farm worker theme in a group of paintings that includes the two-panel screen *Farmers and Ox on a Path* (cat. 93). This fall scene of harvesters walking home along grass-lined paths, bringing freshly cut bamboo, shows the hot and humid atmosphere of early fall. The man with the ox is dressed in a summer ramie kimono open to his belly. He walks in a desultory manner, letting his animal lead the way while he passes the time with a friend. The overall green and gold tonality of the picture, punctuated only by the rich, wet, inky color of the ox, gives a soft, warm impression reflective of the season. Mists of gold flecks and tufts of ground cover rendered with a puddled-ink technique (*tarashikomi*) enhance the dreamlike effect of this nearly monotone rendering. The realistic approach of Shikō's late painting of rice cultivation stands in clear distinction to the purely aesthetic quality of this earlier Rinpa-style scene. In this painting the laborers lose any didactic or illustrative function that they might have in a genre picture, becoming instead signifiers of time, place, and ambiance. By serving as atmosphere-enhancing details, these farmers recall the original function of worker figures in early Yamatoe-style pictures of famous places, seasons, and ceremonial events of the months.

Shikō had already painted the scene of farmers with an ox on one of a pair of six-panel screens executed in the same style as *Farmers and Ox on a Path*. The selection and enlargement of a single vignette, as seen in Shikō's two-panel screen (and Morikage's *Enjoying the Evening Cool under an Arbor*), reflect advances in painting composition made during the Momoyama period. Artists of that time selected single or small groups of motifs — for instance, an amazing tree, a pair of mythological beasts, or a group of stylish townspeople or nobles — and set them against an abstracted, decorative background. The device of plucking and enlarging a motif from earlier works or from themes with multiple figures became a mainstay in art of the Edo period, occurring often in pictures of workers. Some of the most evocative images are of fishing, a theme with complex reverberations. A Muromachi-period *Beach and Pine* (*hamamatsu*) screen (see fig. 1) may have served as a source for images of men pulling boats seen on a lacquer tray (cat. 94) and on a variety of ceramics and works in other media.



cat. 93
Watanabe Shikō,
Farmers and Ox on a Path,
two-panel screen;
ink, color, and gold on paper,
166.2 x 176.6
(65 ³/₈ x 69 ¹/₂),
Tokyo National Museum

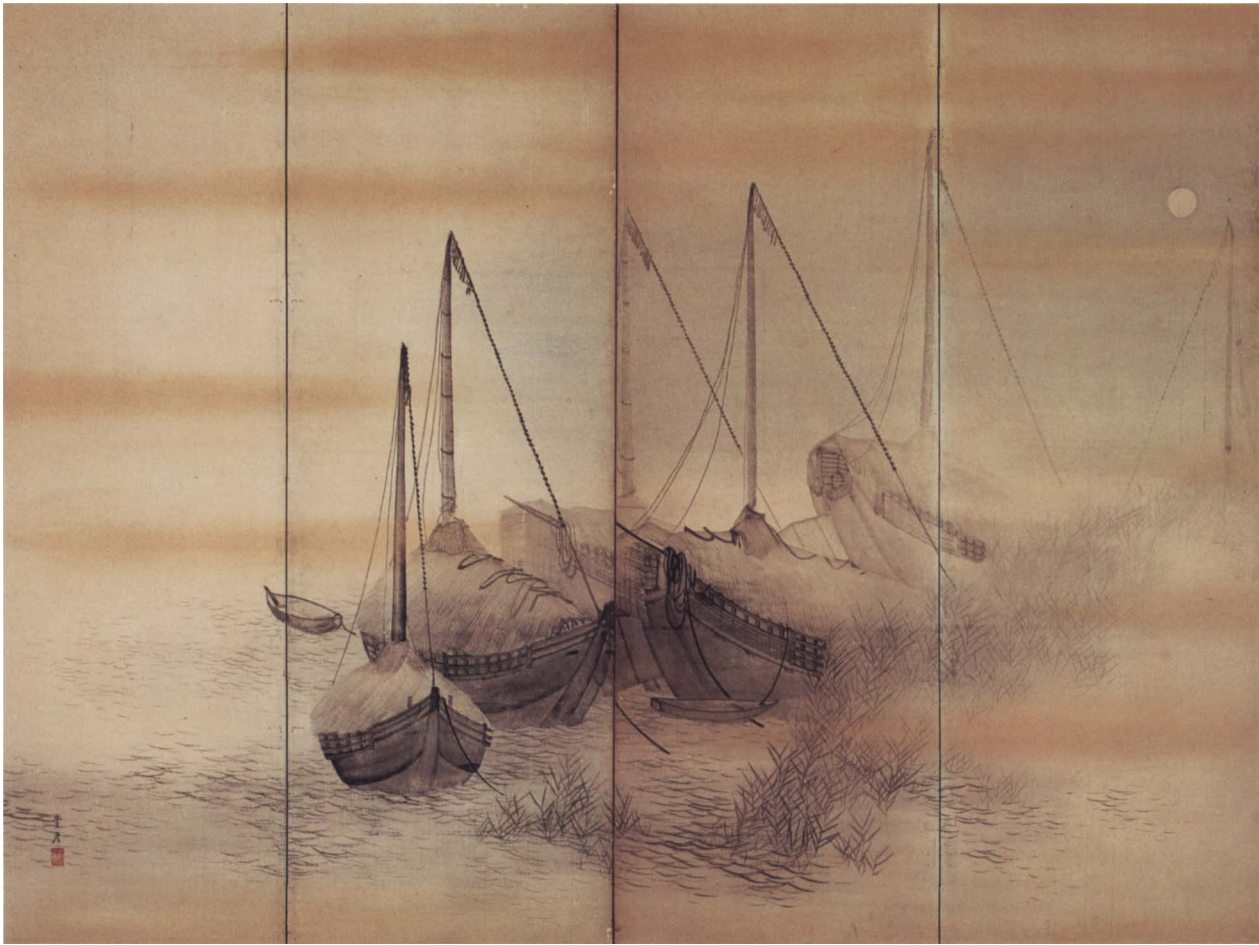
Going beyond the screen's depiction of strenuous work, the distorted poses of the men on the tray enter the realm of pure dynamism. The mushroomlike pine trees seem to pursue the men across the top edge of the tray, their presence possibly reminding us that the source of the design is a Beach and Pine landscape.

Ogata Kōrin, one of the premier artists of the Edo period, created a curious image of a cormorant fisherman (cat. 96). Kōrin's fisherman wears a court cap, whereas contemporaneous paintings of cormorant fishermen do not show such dress. The figure could be a quote from an earlier painting or courtly literature. Paintings of cormorants and fishing boats by Yamamoto Soken (active 1683? – 1796), Kōrin's early teacher, and by Ogata Kenzan (1663 – 1743), Kōrin's younger brother, done in the same style but without the figure, illustrate a poem by the courtier and poetic immortal Fujiwara no Teika (1162 – 1241): "As swiftly as the flares disappear,/Upstream in the river where the cormorants fish,/On this short summer night,/This month of parched weather, too,/Will soon be gone."²¹ The bounding waves and the curving line that defines the boat, as well as the forward-leaning pose of the fisherman and the diagonal structure of the composition, create a heightened visual tension, hinting that this painting might come from a dramatic source. The later Rinpa artist Sakai Hōitsu (1761 – 1828) added a poem at the upper left, which describes cormorant fishing on the Ōi river, near Arashiyama in Kyoto. As there is no particular signifier of Arashiyama in the painting, Hōitsu might have been influenced by the fishing subject alone when he selected the poem.

Okamoto Toyohiko (1773 – 1845) indirectly indicated the presence of boatmen in *Moored Boats* (cat. 95), an homage to a painting by his teacher Goshun (1752 – 1811). In a manner quite distinct from Kōrin's expressionistic painting, Toyohiko followed the lessons of the naturalistic Maruyama-Shijō school of painters when he created the illusion of a three-dimensional setting and fully realized seasonal environments for his boats. The weighty, volumetric forms of the ships are revealed beyond the pine tree in the winter scene, and shrouded by the mist in the autumn view. In the former a cover of heavy snow is seen beyond pines in a rocky cove; in the latter reeds sprout through low waves in warm misty moonlight. Toyohiko evokes the sounds of waves lapping and rigging slapping against the ships' masts. The artist followed an old Japanese aesthetic principle of partial disclosure, which holds that an object is more beautiful, elicits greater wonder, and challenges the imagination further if it is only partly revealed, like the moon glimpsed through clouds. Though Toyohiko excelled at showing volume and mass — and couched the objects in romantic terms by partly enshrouding them — he is treating a theme that was explored repeatedly from the Momoyama period to his own time.

Kaihō Yūshō (1533 – 1615) investigated the related theme of drying fishing nets in a pair of folding screens (fig. 6). Using the graphic shapes of the nets, Yūshō reminded his viewers of the proximity of the fishermen; he also arranged the nets as purely decorative forms. The fisherman's net motif became a favorite design on clothing (see cat. 60), lacquerware, and ceramics — especially Kokutani ware. Compared with the purely decorative treatment of these implements of labor, Toyohiko's vision is more objective. His realistic view, though not playfully decorative and elegant like Yūshō's, enters the realm of the lyrical.

Nagasawa Rosetsu (1754 – 1799) selected as a topic from the famous places and famous things genre (*meisho meibutsu*) the women of Ōhara, whose descendants still bring firewood from a town north of Kyoto into the old capital (cat. 97). In the manner developed in Momoyama genre painting and fully exploited by ukiyoe artists during the Edo period (see John Carpenter's essay), Rosetsu, a student of



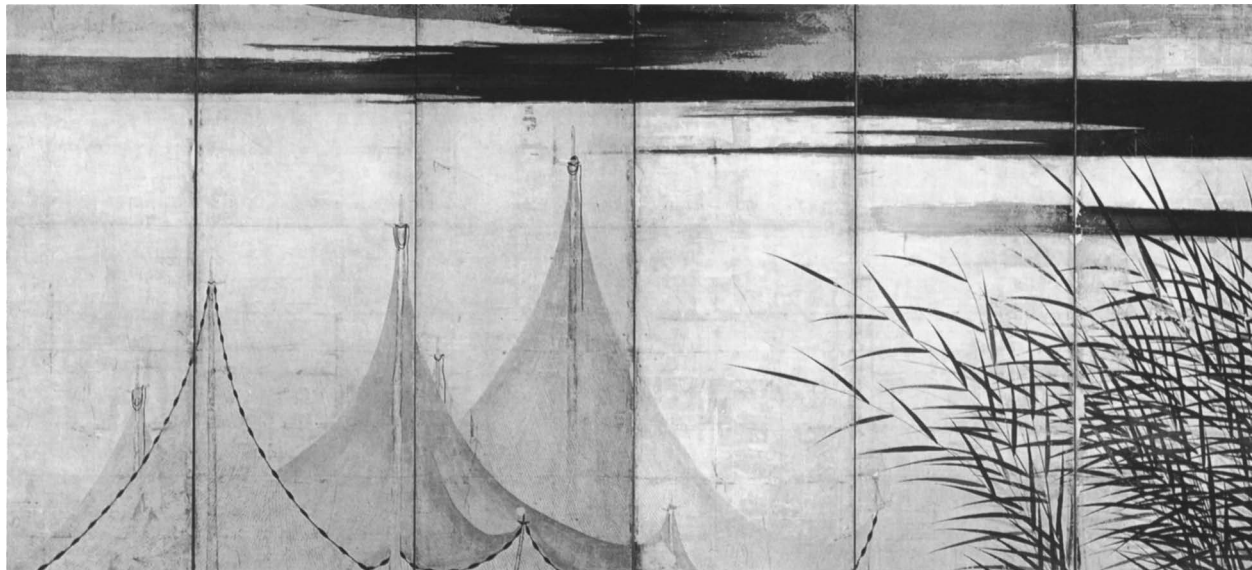
cat. 95
Okamoto Toyohiko,
Moored Boats in Autumn,
detail from a pair
of six-panel screens;
ink and light color on paper,
each 136 x 276
(53½ x 108⅝),
Kyoto National Museum

Maruyama Ōkyo, reinterpreted the theme of a woman from Ōhara as a “beauty portrait” (*bijinga*). The woman looks suggestively at the viewer, her left hand delicately pulling a cord to balance the enormous bundle of firewood on her head. Her clothing is a heterogeneous mix of richly decorated and simply dyed cottons, materials legally befitting her status. Under her burden, and within the limitations of her station, she exudes tremendous personal power. This paradoxical treatment is not a matter of fantasy alone. The commoner of the middle Edo period was totally circumscribed by governmental regulations restricting dress, housing, and the display of possessions.²² Within these restraints, however, commoners managed to create their own cultural milieu, often in diametric opposition to the government’s principles.

LITERATURE
INTO ART

Though the place of the commoner had been enhanced during the Momoyama and early Edo periods by the development of commerce and the new position of merchants and artisans among the educated elites, the suffocating restrictions imposed on the populace as the Edo period progressed caused a return to the ideals of eremitism. Some turned to the evanescent pleasures of the “floating world” depicted in ukiyoe, others to travel or vicarious escapism. For painters of the Japanese literati school (*Nanga* or *Bunjinga*), who followed the tenets of the Chinese scholar-artists, painting bucolic landscapes that featured fishermen and woodcutters was a viable means of casting one’s mind away from a

fig. 6
 Attributed to Kaihō Yūshō,
 Fishing Nets,
 one of a pair of six-panel
 screens; ink, color, and
 gold on paper,
 each 159.6 x 352
 (62⁷/₈ x 138¹/₂),
 Museum of the Imperial
 Collections,
 Imperial Household Agency



restrictive existence and returning to a more objective view of the world. Yosa Buson (1716–1783), a haiku poet as well as a painter, repeatedly rendered scrolls and screens of peasants, fishermen, and woodcutters in the countryside. While the more humanistic painters of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries would incorporate the hardships of these peasants into their portrayals, Buson's works maintain the ideals extolled in Chinese poetry: the man of the world yearning for the freedom of the fisherman or woodcutter and envying their untrammelled rural existence.

The eleventh-century Chinese philosopher, poet, and painter Su Dongpo praised fishermen and woodcutters for their unfettered existence. A poem by his follower Zhao Pingwen puts forth the ideal of the fisherman and woodcutter and their happy disenfranchisement from the system promulgated by the government:

These two old men have long forgotten the world,
 And taken trees and rocks as their followers.
 When they happen to meet each other,
 Wind and moon must have directed them there.
 Decline and rise [of empires] is not my business;
 Why should I be engaged in these petty affairs? ²³

Literary themes of work were drawn not only from poetry but from theater, especially *nō*, and from parables. Watanabe Kazan explored the Chinese parable of Count Yu (cat. 98), who lived his life properly as a fair and honest judge and jailer and then expanded the gate of his village to fit a four-horse carriage; he had complete faith that these actions would bring success to his descendants. Kazan, though probably under house arrest at the time that he executed this painting, advocated the ideals of the government, especially in its Confucianist philosophical bent. The principle of loyalty central to Confucianism is embodied in this parable and picture. In the painting workers industriously construct the gate to the village, as a man kneels in homage to Count Yu at the lower right, and Yu's sons and his dogs — a symbol of loyalty — play by the gate and near the village wall. Perhaps Kazan was endeavoring to show the importance of this ethic in his life at a time when his loyalty to the regime was called into question.

The most famous collection of poetry in Japan is the *One Hundred Poems by One Hundred Poets*, assembled by Fujiwara no Teika in the mid-thirteenth century. Treating the experiences and tribulations of life, these poems remain part of popular culture; they are still frequently quoted and are the subject of a New Year's card game. In a series of woodblock prints Hokusai reinterpreted these respected poems from a lower-class perspective, through the eyes of a wet nurse. By the nineteenth century literacy was widespread and books were easily available, either for sale or through lending libraries. Not everyone was privy to the subtleties of the poetic art form, however. Hokusai's wet nurse filtered the poems through her life experiences, sometimes interpreting their imagery literally, sometimes expanding on the feeling they imparted to her. Occasionally she became inextricably entangled in a comical homonym. The humorous use of homonyms, particularly in poetry, was a well-explored device for satire in the Edo period, especially in ukiyoe.

Using the wet nurse as interpreter, Hokusai created images that were somewhat disrespectful toward ancient culture and the aristocracy, and by extension, the entire ruling class. These poetic images interpreted by a lower-class laborer were sold to the lower classes, and they expressed the iconoclastic attitude popular among merchants and artisans of the time. Satire and sly humor were among the few avenues for protest open to these people.

Many of the scenes in this series are anachronistic, peopled with Hokusai's contemporaries rather than those of the original poets. Of the scenes with a contemporary bent toward satire, one of the most amusing is the illustration of a poem by the Empress Jitō (cat. 100). The poem refers to the



cat. 102
Katsushika Hokusai,
illustrating the poem
by Kakinomoto no Hitomaro,
from *One Hundred
Poems by One Hundred Poets
as Explained by the Wet Nurse*,
c. 1835–1836,
color woodblock print,
approx. 26 x 38 (10 1/4 x 15),
Machida City Museum of
Graphic Arts

Mount of Heaven's Perfume, a hill near Nara where in Jitō's time people spread their white under-kimono in early summer to air them. The white cloths in the Hokusai print are at first reminiscent of the garments laid out for airing, but closer inspection reveals that the workers are soaking flax in the river to weave into linen later. The epithet used in Hokusai's time to describe the stench of soaking flax was "heaven's perfume."²⁴ Thus the romantic impression of the aristocratic poem is reduced through the nurse's practical experience to something of a less appealing nature.

Another print illustrates a poem by Minamoto no Muneyuki ason (cat. 101) describing winter loneliness in a mountain hamlet after the departure of guests. A group of huntsmen warm themselves by a raging bonfire. To their right is an abandoned hut, perhaps used as a way station for hunters during a more hospitable season. Snow piles up on an oven and a hanging pot while the hunters stand outside around the enormous fire. Ignoring the shelter nearby, they strike uncomfortable poses: some splay their hands out toward the fire; one turns his rear end toward the flame; and another turns his face away from the extreme heat. The group's tense postures, belying their friendly banter, suggest that they may shortly give up on the frigid mountain. Soon the hut will be abandoned, mirroring the lonely and dejected mood of the poem.

Another print illustrates a poem by Kakinomoto no Hitomaro (cat. 102) that compares the drooping tail of a pheasant to the despondent feeling of preparing to sleep alone. The first poem's word, *ashibiki*, means "foot-drawn" or "foot-dragging," and is also a homonym for "mountain." Hokusai's wet nurse, as one who has always labored, seizes on the word "foot-drawn" as she relates this image of foot-dragging work. To the wet nurse perhaps a long night would mean not loneliness but comforting a sleepless child, an occupation as exhausting as this scene of fishermen hauling a net uphill.

In a final insult to high literary accomplishment the wet nurse makes a travesty of Fujiwara no Michinobu ason's poem (cat. 103) about the sadness of parting at dawn and anticipation of meeting again. In this design customers hurry home at dawn from a night of revelry in the brothels of the Yoshiwara district, which they no doubt regretted leaving. Some customers hide behind the curtains of palanquins, while others trudge the paths toward Edo holding lanterns lit in the still-dark early hours.

THE WORKER
IN ACTION

Among artists of the nineteenth century, Hokusai was the champion of the worker. In his *manga* sketches, produced from about 1810 to 1820, he took a step beyond the encyclopedic array of figures in the *Occupations and Activities of Each Month* screen (cat. 88). Hokusai analyzed the scope of activities of working-class people, devoting pages of sketches to the actions of a single figure or of a group engaged in a variety of related motions — for instance, women bathing, monks chanting, or people dancing. Hokusai also made masterly depictions of interactions among groups of working-class people, perhaps by studying the behavior of his neighbors. He approached his subjects sympathetically at times and somewhat derisively at others. As we examine the *manga* (and the prints that resulted from these studies), it becomes evident that the multifarious poses of the human body, in their potential for foreshortening, dynamism, interplay, and drama, were deeply fascinating to Hokusai. Noble subjects would seem less likely to be caught in such poses, except when, as we see in novels that Hokusai illustrated, they were being murdered.

In about 1830 to 1832 Hokusai created his masterpiece, the series *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*. These works belong both to the very old tradition of famous place pictures and to the brand new genre of souvenir prints. There was a boom in travel after restrictions were lifted, and many of these prints were purchased by vicarious travelers or by wayfarers seeking mementos (see Melinda Takeuchi’s essay). The views of Japan’s symbol, Mount Fuji, seen from Tōtōmi (cat. 106) and Kajikazawa (cat. 107) could be thought of as modern echoes of the fisherman and woodcutter theme. Hokusai’s figures, however, are not romanticized recluses engaged in lofty thought while isolated from the maddening rituals of civic life. They are real people of the time, captured by the artist before the backdrop of a mountain that was also a god. The pragmatic attitudes of the townsman artist are mixed with his awe for the lofty volcano at Japan’s heart.

THE CLOTHES
THAT MAKE THE
PERSON

Designs with worker themes were featured on another art form in the Edo period — the mobile, three-dimensional canvas of the *kosode* (short-sleeved kimono). In the late seventeenth century Miyazaki Yūzen developed a new technique for paste-resist dyeing. Over the next century so-called *yūzen* dyeing evolved to allow pictorial effects such as shading and leaving reserved areas and outlines in white. The minute, genre-inspired designs seen in paintings and lacquerware were adapted to *kosode* design. Customers chose designs for their garments from pattern books (*hinagatabon*).

Although farmwork designs appeared in eighteenth-century pattern books, a *kosode* with the Rice Cultivation in the Four Seasons theme (cat. 108) from the first half of the nineteenth century is a rare survivor of this type. In the manner of the period the design ranges around the lower half of the *kosode*. Scenes of cultivation and harvesting are arranged not according to their true order but purely for their compositional fit. The pictorial style is that of Morikage, and the farmers are in dress of the Genroku era (1688–1704), perhaps indicating a source in earlier painting or a model book for painters. The pictorial effects developed by *yūzen* dyers had the unanticipated result of popularizing painterly compositions in embroidered works. This phenomenon is illustrated by a wrapping cloth (*fukusa*) with a Rice Cultivation in the Four Seasons motif (fig. 7). The minute detailing of costumes and tools, and the shading effects from graded colors of threads show the influence of *yūzen* dyeing on embroidery.

One nineteenth-century long-sleeved kimono, or *furisode* (cat. 109), displays at its lower edges scenes of women tending tea plants. Of particular interest are the ink-wash effects on the reed mats and the detailed illustrations of the textile techniques that have been used on the costumes of the tea cultivators. Uji, a city south of Kyoto famous for tea growing, might have inspired the *furisode*’s design, which could thus represent a specific place as well as a picturesque genre scene.

Workers of the Edo period frequently decorated their bodies with costume. Four fantastically painted firemen’s coats of the late Edo period (cats. 110–113) reveal how by packaging oneself in certain clothing a person could become a moving work of art. These heavily stitched and padded jackets — part of an ensemble that included a hood, breeches, and gloves — would be soaked before the wearers went out to fight fires. The jackets were indigo dyed on the outside and hand painted on the interior; the name of the brigade was dyed on the lapel. After the fire was put out, the jacket would be turned inside out and the interior design representing the brigade would be displayed in hopes that the group would reap rewards for their success. The heroic motifs seen on these examples include a rain dragon, a dragon and tiger, the god of thunder, and a figure who is probably the monk Mongaku. Any of these

cat. 108
*Kosode with design of
Rice Cultivation
in the Four Seasons,*
early nineteenth century,
paste-resist dye on
figured silk satin,
167.2 x 124 (65⁷/₈ x 48⁷/₈),
Tokyo National Museum





fig. 7
 Wrapping cloth
 with design of Rice Cultivation
 in the Four Seasons,
 nineteenth century,
 multicolored silk and gold
 metallic thread
 embroidery on silk satin;
 red silk crepe lining,
 91.4 x 73.3 (36¹/₈ x 28⁷/₈),
 Los Angeles County
 Museum of Art,
 Costume Council Fund

emblems could serve as a powerful amulet for the firemen and transform the wearers into pictorial symbols of strength and style.

Whereas early Edo-period scenes of work in art had represented the interest of samurai patrons — exhibiting details of working life as a curiosity, a Confucian theme, or an aspect of place or season — social developments during the era forced a change. By the mid-nineteenth century the culture of the townspeople had become an arena for experimentation and innovation. By contrast, samurai, like Watanabe Kazan, who too strongly advocated change were silenced. Pictures and costumes on the work theme became more personal, more often based on direct observation or experience after the status of workers changed and a greater percentage of patronage came from the working classes.

1

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19

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20

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Work: Catalogue 87 – 113

87
Tray with scene of men pulling a foundation stone

Seventeenth century
Lacquer on wood with makie
32.7 x 51.8 x 3.5 (12 7/8 x 20 3/8 x 1 3/8)
Tokyo National Museum

Illustrated page 157

• This rectangular tray has a broad, raised, ribbonlike rim, inverted at the corners. The design on the face shows samurai observing workers hauling an enormous foundation stone mounted on a wheeled cart. A figure standing atop the stone waves a Shinto paper offering to direct the men on foot.

The decorative techniques include densely applied gold dust for a metallic appearance (*togidashi*), gold lines, reserve drawing (*kakiwari*), as well as needle drawing (*harigaki*). On the reverse of the rim are eight sets of two interlocking family crests, indicating that the tray might have come from a wedding trousseau.

Trays of this form were used to hold utensils for incense (Watt and Ford 1991, 230). The design of large figures against a relatively plain background indicates a date in the seventeenth century. The theme supports this date; images of workmen gained popularity in lacquer and other art forms in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when massive campaigns were launched to build castles and surrounding towns. HG

88
Occupations and Activities of Each Month

Mid-eighteenth century
Pair of six-panel screens; ink, color, and gold on paper
Each 79.4 x 235.8 (31 1/4 x 92 7/8)
The Sakai Museum, Osaka

Illustrated pages 158 – 159

• Boisterous crowds engaged in a vast array of occupations, celebrations, and entertainments fill this pair of screens from corner to corner. The subject is unusual for its mix of the theme of tradesmen with that of monthly festivals and ceremonies. The activities on each screen are arranged in an upper and a lower register, each with a row of buildings fronting a street. Each month occupies the top or bottom of two adjacent panels. Reading from upper right to lower left: the first, second, and third lunar months run along the top of the right screen, and the fourth, fifth, and sixth are arranged below. The remaining six months similarly fill the left screen.

Every level of occupation is shown, including craftsmen who create stringed instruments, floral arrangements, and bonsai in the sixth month, masseuses and prostitutes in the fourth month. Some shops are placed in a month related to their business: for example, doll and doll-furniture makers are in the third month, when the Girl's Festival occurs, and chrysanthemum sellers are in the ninth month, when their wares are the floral standard of the season. Others— such as the weavers, dyers, and stitchery artists shown in the tenth month — are not connected with a seasonal

reference. Seasonal activities and wares for sale are also interspersed with year-round occupations in the bustling roadways. Two circle dances mark events in the second and seventh months, and a line dance is performed in the sixth month. Masses of street performers, itinerant monks, hawkers, and tinkers are mixed in with children playing games to celebrate the seasons. The screens also depict a wide variety of animal life.

This painting was rendered by an anonymous town artist working in a style related to that of the Tosa school. He added gold lines within costume outlines and showed the full spectrum of textile techniques and architectural types to imbue this screen with richness and luxurious detail. Occupation screens from the early Edo period devoted a great deal of attention to details of the materials needed for each craft and to the organization of each shop interior. By the mid-eighteenth century much greater emphasis was given to the division of labor and range of possible specialties, making a mid-eighteenth century date likely for this pair of screens. HG





89
Large dish with design of porcelain production

c. 1820–1830s
Nabeshima ware
Porcelain with underglaze cobalt blue
Diameter 59.4 (23³/₈)
Arita Ceramic Museum, Saga

• This plate gives the viewer a rare glimpse into the methods of ceramic production at the official kiln of the Nabeshima domain in Ōkawachi. The large central square area shows an interior view of the workshop, while eight overlapping scenes around the perimeter depict separate stages of production, though not in sequence.

Starting in the upper right quadrant, we see a landscape where the porcelain clay is mined and a roundel showing a porter carrying the clay to be refined by the water mortars. Proceeding counterclockwise, a man can be seen sieving the clay to remove the iron impurities. Production continues in the central square, where the clay is thrown on the wheel, finished, and molded. A supervisor wearing glasses views the process from the upper left, while beside him a workman paints underglaze cobalt blue onto the bisque-fired wares. Women bring tea, and a child looks on. On the right in a raised tatami-matted section the porcelains are inspected, and a man with an accounting book records the results. The story continues at the margins in the lower right quadrant, where women with packhorses gather firewood to heat the kilns and, moving clockwise this time, a woman glazes the decorated wares while a boy packs finished pieces. Skipping the adjacent scene, we see men sealing

a kiln with clay for the firing and stacking wares inside it. Returning to the intervening section, men can be seen firing the kiln, six chambers of which are visible. The last roundel depicts the fired porcelains being carried and placed in a warehouse.

This dish is said to have been owned by Nakano Kizaemon Hidehisa, the domain official in charge of the area where it was produced. NCR

90
Kusumi Morikage (c. 1620 – c. 1690)
Enjoying the Evening Cool under an Arbor

Two-panel screen; ink and light color on paper
149.1 x 165 (58³/₄ x 65)
Tokyo National Museum
National Treasure

Illustrated page 162

• Kusumi Morikage created an entirely original image in this, his most famous painting. As the first true portrait of a lower-echelon working family, the scene is utterly lacking in either caricature or decorative intent. Morikage's scene reveals the family's humble circumstances and their efforts to create beauty in their lives by planting floral vines. We see them taking time on a sultry summer night to enjoy a cool breeze and each other's company. Morikage captured their pleasure in an evening spent together through individual pose, group positioning, facial expression, and casual brushwork. He surrounded the figures with simple shapes to frame them. The curved form of the great moon, glowing through the humid night, is repeated in the bodies of the figures and in the gourds and leaves of the trailing vine. All other elements are echoing squares or rectangles, reflecting the format of the painting. The colors are kept very

thin to evoke hues seen in dim light. The personal sentiment that we witness in the painting — as well as the figures' clothing, which is particular to the Kanazawa region — indicates that Morikage must have seen or met people like these during his stay in the Kaga domain.

The poetic mood of this painting does not occur by accident, according to Yoshizawa Chū, who claims that it illustrates a waka poem by Kinoshita Chōshōshi (1570 – 1650) (Yoshizawa 1954). The poem reads: “Their pleasure is the cool beneath a trellis of evening faces: the men in undergarments, the women in waist wraps” (translation by Royall Tyler). Kinoshita was a samurai whose fief was confiscated after he lost favor with the Tokugawa shogunate. Morikage would likely have empathized with the samurai's plight, and he clearly took a compassionate and perceptive view of the laborers in the Kaga domain. HG



91
Kusumi Morikage (c. 1620 – c. 1690)
Rice Cultivation in the Four Seasons

Pair of six-panel screens;
ink and light color on paper
Each 151 x 347 (59 1/2 x 136 5/8)
Kyoto National Museum
Important Cultural Property

• The Confucian painting theme of rice cultivation emphasizes the importance of the farmer, who feeds the nation and struggles for the good of all. Rice cultivation scenes were considered appropriate for decoration of public rooms in a samurai's house or castle, or as a didactic theme for meeting rooms in temples. From the late Muromachi to the Edo period this subject was usually painted in a Chinese-based style. Kusumi Morikage created a number of such paintings in a Chinese manner before rendering this one, which strips the theme of its foreign connotation and brings it

home through a Japanese manner of landscape rendering and personally observed narrative details.

Starting on the left screen, seeds are soaked in a stream, beyond which a farmer plows the fields where the seeds will sprout. After sprouting, the seedlings are transplanted into wet paddies (in the right two panels) by women who move to dengaku music performed by the village males. At the left end of the right screen the grain is harvested and then hauled across the river on horseback to the village.



One farmer without a horse carries an enormous load on his back, under which we see only his head and feet. More harvesting occurs on the right bank of the river, but we focus on a boy yanking a stubborn horse that refuses to carry its load. In the right two panels workers thresh, mill, weigh, and package rice for transport to the fief lords. The grain would be distributed as samurai stipends and sold as food for more affluent members of the populace. HG



92
 Watanabe Shikō (1683–1755)
Rice Cultivation in the Four Seasons
 Pair of six-panel screens;
 ink and light color on paper
 Each 155.9 x 393.6 (61³/₈ x 143¹/₈)
 Private Collection, Hyōgo

• In this pair of screens Shikō took inspiration from the painting on the same topic by Kusumi Morikage (cat. 91). Like Morikage, Shikō apparently went to a local village to study the activities of its inhabitants. He then composed his observations into this maplike bird's-eye view. Reading from right to left are the tasks of the seasons: plowing and rice transplantation, which occur in late spring and early summer, on the right screen, and fall harvesting and processing of the rice on the left screen. Though rice cultivation (the basis of the Japanese economy) is the central theme of the painting, Shikō added depictions of subsidiary crops. For example, reading from right to left on the left screen, we see cotton fields in the first panel, a taro field at the bottom of the third panel, and cotton processing in the fifth panel. The scene also

reveals fascinating details of village life, such as a daikagura dance by visiting entertainers in the second panel from the right on the right screen, and a farmhouse being built in the left two panels of the left screen. We also see samurai and their palanquin bearers stopping for summer refreshment at a tea shop in the central two panels of the right screen.

Shikō followed his predecessors Kano Tan'yū (1602–1674) and Ogata Kōrin (1658–1716) in his method of sketching from life. Yet he went far beyond these artists in the realistic presentation seen in his late work. His approach served as an inspiration to the painters of the naturalist school who were active at the end of the eighteenth century, especially Maruyama Ōkyo (1733–1795). HG





93
Watanabe Shikō (1683–1755)
Farmers and Ox on a Path

Two-panel screen; ink, color,
and gold on paper
166.2 x 176.6 (65 ³/₈ x 69 ¹/₂)
Tokyo National Museum

Illustrated page 164

- An oxherd carrying harvested bamboo converses with his companion, who has a small scythe and a basket of forest products, as they walk through a landscape of autumn grasses and trees. Gold flecks establish the ground under the trees and bushes and form shimmering mists in the background. These combine with mounds of earth defined by puddled-ink technique (*tarashikomi*) to give the landscape a surreal and decorative aspect. The scene is dominated by gold, yellow, and light green tones, accented by the ink wash on the ox and the dark accents of foliage, all of which evoke the warmth of the early fall. The decorative painting style, representation of the figures, and use of puddled ink are all hallmarks of the Rinpa manner, to which Watanabe Shikō adhered later in life.

The subject may refer to the idealized life of the literati recluse. Such rural hermits were esteemed for their ability to contemplate higher matters, unfettered by the constraints of court or city life. HG



94
Tray with design of men pulling a boat

Seventeenth/eighteenth century
Lacquer with makie, bamboo, and
wicker rim and handle
32 x 42.5 x 5 (12 ⁵/₈ x 16 ³/₄ x 2)
Tokyo National Museum

- Deceptively simple in construction and technique, this oblong tray is sophisticated in design. Its unassuming qualities suggest that it might have been made for use in the tea ceremony. Gold filings are densely sprinkled to imitate gold leaf (*hiramakie*) in a style that, set against a plain brown or black surface, was popular in the early Edo period.

This view of a boat, reeds, fishermen, and pines is derived from the Beach and Pine genre. The artist here has used economical means to display

the strength of the fishermen: the bending pole on the boat where the rope is tied, and the taut line of the rope itself, stretched across a broad space. The agitated silhouettes of pines at the top echo the tension of the scene below.

The tray's rim and handle are of double slats of bamboo secured by wickerwork. The bamboo knots have been carefully positioned near the center of each side. The final design is rich in its internal dynamics. HG



95
Okamoto Toyohiko (1773 – 1845)
Moored Boats in Winter and Autumn

Pair of six-panel screens;
ink and light color on paper
Each 136 x 276 (53 1/2 x 108 5/8)
Kyoto National Museum

• The boats pictured in these screens by Okamoto Toyohiko were used for cargo transport between Osaka and ports in northern Japan. Paintings like these may have been commissioned by merchants who owned fleets of such boats (Miyajima et al. 1985, 176). The curved, heavy wood construction and reed-mat covers of the boats create ovoid forms broken by the empty triangles of the masts and lines. In the winter screen (right) hills and pines heavily laden with snow enclose the boats, only partly revealed, in a frozen cove. In the autumn screen (left) Toyohiko placed the boats in a complex grouping, with the more distant ones enveloped in mist beyond clumps of reeds.

Toyohiko here employed traditional seasonal signifiers in the landscape genre as fully realized settings for his theme of moored boats. To render snow he used techniques such as outside shading (*sotoguma*), and to convey mass and volume he painted one edge of a form dark (*kataguma*) and used texture strokes developed for naturalistic effect by Maruyama Ōkyo, a founder of the Maruyama-Shijō school. Toyohiko's teacher, Goshun (1752 – 1811), who founded the Shijō branch of that school, painted moored boats on a set of sliding door panels at Daigōji in Kyoto, but his picture simply showed four boats standing in misty moonlit water. Toyohiko's treatment of the subject — with its lyrical, evanescent quality, rich use of ink, naturalistic rendering of volume and space, and composition with a centered focus — make this work a precursor to the Kyoto school of Nihonga (Japanese-style painting) of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. HG

96
Ogata Kōrin (1658 – 1716)
Cormorant Fishing
Hanging scroll; ink and
light color on paper
97.8 x 33.2 (38 1/2 x 13 1/8)
The Seikado Foundation, Tokyo
Important Art Object

• Ogata Kōrin executed this painting with rich wet inks and a casual drawing manner indicative of the theme of literati reclusion. A single fisherman works at night by light from a basket-held charcoal fire. He watches intently for his cormorants to catch fish — which he prevents them from swallowing by use of the tethers he holds around their necks. All concentration is directed in a circle that leads from the fisherman's eyes, to the fish in the cormorant's mouth, around the prow of the boat, and up the fisherman's back. The leftward thrust of this focus is counterbalanced by the foreground bird, which points toward the lower right.

The mysterious detail of a fisherman wearing a court hat might indicate that this painting illustrates a classic poem. The poem written at the upper left is by Sakai Hōitsu (1761 – 1828), a follower of Kōrin. It reads: "On the Ōi River the cormorant fisher's fires/ Show by night how swiftly waves carry the boats down" (translated by Royall Tyler). HG



97

Nagasawa Rosetsu (1754 – 1799)

A Woman of Ōhara Carrying Firewood

Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk

130.3 x 83.2 (51 1/4 x 32 3/4)

Shizuoka Prefectural Museum of Art

• Women from Ōhara, a small town north of Kyoto, have brought bundles of firewood to the old capital for centuries. They wear strapped sandals, white leggings, broad white pants under a kimono with a heavy sash (obi), forearm covers, and a white scarf. They use a hand-held cord to balance the firewood on their heads. The women of Ōhara are often included in famous views of Kyoto.

Nagasawa Rosetsu's painting of a woman from Ōhara shows a reed mat and other bundles tied on top of her firewood, along with a decorative branch of flaming red maple leaves. A single red leaf flutters to the ground. The woman, a robust but softly gentle beauty, casts a sidelong glance at the viewer. Rosetsu's late work, rendered in the middle to late 1790s before his purported murder in 1799, reveals a deeply personal and eccentric interpretation of his subject matter. Very few pictures of beauties depict them making eye contact with the viewer. The features of this woman accord with the type of beauty popular in Kyoto in this era: elongated eyes, straight nose, oval face, and small lips deeply colored at the center.

Rosetsu's training under Maruyama Ōkyo, founder of a naturalist school of painters in Kyoto, is apparent in techniques such as the washlike treatment of firewood and the precise handling of textile dyeing and weaving patterns as well as in the three-quarter stance, which displays the mass of the figure. HG



Watanabe Kazan (1793 – 1841)
 Count Yu Raising the Gate

c. 1841

Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk
 158 x 51 (62 1/8 x 20)

Private Collection, Tokyo

Important Cultural Property

• The story of Count Yu, from the Chinese compendium *History of the Former or Western Han Dynasty (Hanshu)*, describes a paragon of virtue, a fair judge revered for quietly doing good works. When the gate to his village collapsed, Count Yu paid to rebuild a larger gate, having faith that his virtuous actions would bring good fortune to his descendants. Watanabe Kazan used a Chinese literati style of painting to tell the story. From a raised viewpoint we look down on the foreground scene of construction workers. Western-style perspective and indications of mass for the building are combined with the Chinese painting manner. Kazan shifts the point of view in the middle distance to bring boats transporting building materials into clear view and thus causes them to appear unnaturally close. The zigzag composition progresses across a large open space at the top, through an equivalent area at the center that defines a triangular void above, to further open ground and scattered activity in the lower third of the painting. The focus, effecuated by sharp, clear brushwork, is even throughout.

Kazan created this work and *Silk Weaving under Moonlight* (cat. 99) as part of a series on moral lessons during his house arrest from 1840 to 1842. He had been sentenced to permanent confinement for his criticism of the government's seclusion policy and for his promotion of western studies. But he was forced to commit suicide in 1842 for disregarding the terms of his arrest by selling paintings to support himself. A letter to his student Tsubaki Chinzan (1801 – 1854) regarding *Count Yu Raising the Gate* gives its true date of 1841, though to sell this and other paintings, Kazan had written dates on the works that preceded his arrest.

A preparatory drawing for this work shows the artist's fully realized composition for the foreground and middle distance. Details of the background were polished in the final version. HG



99
Watanabe Kazan (1793 – 1841)
Silk Weaving under Moonlight

c. 1841
Hanging scroll, ink and color on silk
127 x 56 (50 x 22)
The Seikado Foundation, Tokyo
Important Art Object

• Watanabe Kazan selected the three scenes in the foreground of this painting — weaving, threading silk on a skein, and crossing between pavilions by way of a roofed corridor — from a Chinese book entitled *Rice Cultivation and Weaving Scenes from the “Peiwen Anthology.”* He chose images from the rice cultivation section of the book for the bucolic village in the middle distance.

The *Peiwen Anthology* of moralistic sayings was compiled in 1711 under the direction of Emperor Kangxi (r. 1662 – 1722). The Confucian writings recognized the farmer as the foundation for economic security and defined him as a metaphor for peace and prosperity. Silk weaving symbolized industry.

Kazan conceived the painting as a tripartite composition, using the standard practice in Chinese painting whereby one looks down on the foreground, straight across toward the middle ground, and up at the background. The composition is connected by large branching trees that range up the left edge. The efficacious use of “hemp-fiber” brushstrokes in the background mountains shows Kazan’s deep study of Chinese painting under his teacher Tani Bunchō (1763 – 1840). The clustered foreground buildings reveal an interest in western-style perspective.

Although Kazan dated this painting to 1829, it is believed to be from about 1841, the date of his painting *Count Yu Raising the Gate* (cat. 98). HG



100

Katsushika Hokusai (1760 – 1849)
illustrating the poem by Empress
Jitō, from *One Hundred Poems by One
Hundred Poets as Explained by the
Wet Nurse*

c. 1835 – 1836

Color woodblock print
Approx. 26 x 38 (10¹/₄ x 15)
Machida City Museum of Graphic
Arts, Tokyo

• *One Hundred Poems by One Hundred Poets* is an anthology compiled by the courtier Fujiwara no Teika in 1235. The poems became the subject of a card game played at the New Year, and as a result of the game's nearly universal dissemination in Japan, people would instantly recognize the subject matter depicted in this series of prints by Katsushika Hokusai.

Hokusai probably made a hundred designs, and twenty-seven prints were published. The poems, originally written about court life, are presented through the eyes of a wet nurse. And as the life experiences of this working-class woman were so far removed from those of the writers, her interpretations are occasionally quite comical. The general impression, however, is of seeing scenes through the eyes of a woman who is very much down to earth, focusing on reality, not on elegant ideals.

The poem represented here reads:

Spring, it seems, has passed,
And the summer come again;
For the silk-white robes,
So 'tis said, are spread to dry
On the “Mount of Heaven's Perfume.”
(Morse 1989, 28)

The prints in this group, Hokusai's last great series, exhibit much more complex, and sometimes less effective, compositions than those in his

series *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*. In this print a series of overlapping wave forms crescendo in the left background behind the sweeping diagonal of the river and a crossing line of travelers and workers carrying flax away after soaking. “Heaven's Perfume,” the name of the mountain in the poem, was an epithet for the stench of soaking flax in Hokusai's day. Hokusai uses this pun to interpret the scene in a comical manner. HG

101

Katsushika Hokusai (1760 – 1849)
illustrating the poem by Minamoto no
Muneyuki, from *One Hundred Poems by
One Hundred Poets as Explained by the
Wet Nurse*

c. 1835 – 1836

Color woodblock print
Approx. 26 x 38 (10¹/₄ x 15)
Machida City Museum of Graphic
Arts, Tokyo

Winter loneliness
In a mountain hamlet grows
Only deeper, when
Guests are gone, and leaves and grass
Withered are; — so runs my thought.
(Morse 1989, 76)

• This print is graphically the strongest in Hokusai's series on the anthology *One Hundred Poems by One Hundred Poets*. Hunters have built an enormous bonfire in the snow, and uncontrolled smoke billows toward the figure at the left, whose face expresses his discomfort. In the hut to the right an oven with a hanging pot stands frozen, covered by snow. The figures anchor the left corner of a large triangle, the hypotenuse of which is formed by the smoke, which flows in a great swath to the upper right after angling left. The base of the triangle is defined by various positions of legs, vegetation, and snow mounds, while a tree trunk establishes the right side. Within this area seemingly random intersecting angles and triangles echo the chaos of the unleashed fire. HG

102

Katsushika Hokusai (1760 – 1849)
illustrating the poem by Kakinomoto
no Hitomaro, from *One Hundred
Poems by One Hundred Poets
as Explained by the Wet Nurse*

c. 1835 – 1836

Color woodblock print
Approx. 26 x 38 (10¹/₄ x 15)
Machida City Museum of Graphic
Arts, Tokyo

Illustrated page 168

Ah! the foot-drawn trail
Of the mountain-pheasant's tail
Drooped like a down-curved branch! —
Through this long, long-dragging
night
Must I keep my couch alone?
(Morse 1989, 30)

• In this print fishermen drag a net up a mountain stream, an image that illustrates the poem's first word, *ashibiki*, or “foot-drawn,” as well as the hidden meaning of the word, “mountain.” Hokusai composed the scene with lines radiating from an imaginary hub at the lower right corner. Spokes made up of landforms, figures, and smoke from a fire on shore range diagonally up to the left, forming a stacked series of triangles. In the middle distance the poet can be seen sitting alone in his hut.

Kakinomoto no Hitomaro (660? – 739), one of the most beloved of classic Japanese poets, was raised to the status of a Shinto god of poetry after his death. HG





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104

103
Katsushika Hokusai (1760 – 1849)
illustrating the poem by Fujiwara no
Michinobu, from *One Hundred Poems
by One Hundred Poets as Explained by
the Wet Nurse*

c. 1835 – 1836
Color woodblock print
Approx. 26 x 38 (10¹/₄ x 15)
Machida City Museum of Graphic
Arts, Tokyo

Though I know full well
That the night will come again
E'en when day has dawned; —
Yet in truth, I hate the sight
Of the morning's coming light.
(Morse 1989, 116)

• In this scene men on foot and borne in palanquins return from a night of revelry in the licensed entertainment quarters of the Yoshiwara district. Hokusai gave a ribald interpretation to the romantic yearning of the court poet, comparing the poet's anguish at his pending departure from his lover to regret at leaving the brothels at dawn. Farmers in the foreground carry baskets of recently harvested greens, while palanquin bearers dash down a stepped path with their cargo. The rush of the traffic is visually halted by the T-shaped figure of one farmer placed just left of center. This figure and the placid background landscape evoke the bucolic setting that surrounded the hectic urban center of Edo. HG

104
Katsushika Hokusai (1760 – 1849)
illustrating the poem by Emperor
Tenchi, from *One Hundred Poems by
One Hundred Poets as Explained by
the Wet Nurse*

c. 1835 – 1836
Color woodblock print
Approx. 26 x 38 (10¹/₄ x 15)
Machida City Museum of Graphic
Arts, Tokyo

Coarse the rush-mat roof
Sheltering the harvest-hut
Of the autumn rice-field; —
And my sleeves are growing wet
With the moisture dripping through.
(Morse 1989, 26)

• The poet, Emperor Tenchi, was once caught in a rainstorm while traveling through a rice field. He sought shelter in a temporary hut, but rain came through the roof and wet his sleeves. In court poetry wet sleeves are a metaphor for tears shed and wiped away, thus the poem indicates the emperor's sympathy for the plight of poor peasants. Hokusai's print is from the viewpoint of a worker — such as the wet nurse — showing travelers in the scene and a detailed knowledge of workers' tools and methods. HG

105
Katsushika Hokusai (1760 – 1849)
illustrating the poem by Dainagon
Tsunenobu, from *One Hundred Poems
by One Hundred Poets as Explained by
the Wet Nurse*

c. 1835 – 1836
Color woodblock print
Approx. 26 x 38 (10¹/₄ x 15)
Machida City Museum of Graphic
Arts, Tokyo

When the evening comes
From the rice leaves at my gate
Gentle knocks are heard;
And, into my round rush-hut,
Autumn's roaming breeze makes way.
(Morse 1989, 148)

• Hokusai chose the poem's image of the autumn evening wind to animate his scene of plebeian subjects. A traveling monk at the right grasps his hat, and wind bends the plants in the distant rice fields. Hokusai used homonyms for words in the poem to set the pictorial theme of “foot wash- ing” and “gushing well.”

The poem by Tsunenobu was innova- tive in its suggestion that the autumn wind knocks at the door before enter- ing and carrying in the new season. Evocation of sound was rare in Japan- ese poetry before this time. Hokusai's landscape and figures follow the mood set by the poem — slow in move- ment, contemplative, and perhaps pensive in response to the waning of the year. HG



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106

106
Katsushika Hokusai (1760 – 1849)
Mountains of Tōtōmi Province,
from *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*

c. 1830 – 1832
Color woodblock print
Approx. 26 x 38 (10³/₄ x 15)
Tokyo National Museum

• Hokusai structured this composition around three interconnected triangles, one created by the angled timber, and two smaller ones by the supports. In the distance one sees the triangular form of Mount Fuji. The horizontal curves of the foreground landscape and the wafting clouds soften the hard edges of the geometric constructions.

Lumber merchants were among the most prosperous workers in the Edo period because wood and paper houses had to be replaced after frequent urban fires. Here Hokusai shows laborers in the forest who provided materials to these merchants. Hokusai and other landscape artists might have been aided by optical instruments such as monoculars in identifying unusual points of view like this one.

Early states of the print have blue outlines and details and show green in the foliage and the workers' costumes. A gray block was used for Mount Fuji, the saws, smoke, and other clothing details. This simple coloration is a step removed from the pure blue printing (*aizurie*) of some works in the series. In this print Hokusai accomplishes a great deal with a very limited palette. HG

107
Katsushika Hokusai (1760 – 1849)
Kajikazawa in Kai Province,
from *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*

c. 1830 – 1832
Color woodblock print
Approx. 26 x 38 (10³/₄ x 15)
Tokyo National Museum

• In this masterly print Katsushika Hokusai creates an image of contrast and cooperation between human and nature. The print is composed of two large triangles: above is Mount Fuji, a fixed object, and below, at the apex of the second, stands a fisherman, an ephemeral being, teetering precariously on the tip of a rock. The man extends several lines into the waves, presumably around his cormorants' necks as he waits for the birds to bring him their fish. This image resonates with the Buddhist idea of the impermanence of all things: what appears to be an immobile mass, the mountain, is a dormant volcano.

In *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*, Hokusai's most acclaimed series of prints, the artist distilled all his compositional and narrative genius (see also cats. 169, 171 – 176). He showed the most famous landmark of Japan during every season, under many atmospheric conditions, and with myriad scenic variations. He also evoked the reaction of the landscape's inhabitants to this monumental landform.

The set comprises forty-six prints: the original thirty-six, whose early impressions had a Prussian blue outline, followed by ten supplemental prints with a black outline. HG

108
Kosode with design of Rice Cultivation in the Four Seasons

Early nineteenth century
Paste-resist dye on figured silk satin
167.2 x 124 (65⁷/₈ x 48⁷/₈)
Tokyo National Museum

Illustrated page 171

• This kosode illustrates the phases of rice cultivation against a brown silk ground figured with boxes for the shell game and shells. Although the design is visually effective, the subject is not presented in any coherent order. The earth is prepared for tilling on the front right of the skirt, wet fields are plowed at the center back, and seed is thrown into a flooded paddy above the plowing scene. Workers water the paddies with an Archimedes' screw at the bottom left front and with buckets at the lower right back. These scenes bracket views of weeding the ripening rice in summer to early fall, which spread along the bottom center of the back. Out of order at the center left of the back is rice seedling transplantation, which takes place in late spring. Harvesting, threshing, and milling scenes range up the left front panel.

Rice scenes had long been popular in Japanese art as signifiers of specific times of year. In the early modern era rice was used for samurai stipends and formed the basis of the economy. With an increasing living standard, a greater percentage of the population could use rice as their primary source of food. As such, the farmer and rice cultivation became artistic symbols for economic prosperity, peace, and stability as well as for the simple rural life. HG





109
Furisode with scenes of tea cultivation
 Early nineteenth century
 Paste-resist dye on *habutae*
 158 x 132 (62 1/4 x 52)
 Tokyo National Museum

- This long-sleeved garment, called a furisode, is paste-resist dyed with scenes of women tending tea plants. Plants were shaded to slow growth and enhance the tea's sweetness

and depth of color. The manner of the painting reflects that of the Maruyama-Shijō school of naturalist painters in Kyoto. This influence is evident in the mass and space evoked by the positioning and execution of the sheds and tea bushes. In addition, the gradation of tone gives an impression of texture and depth.

The cool colors, habutae ground (a soft, lightweight plain-weave silk), and theme of shading tea plants in springtime combine to indicate the season for this furisode to be worn.

The yūzen method of paste-resist dyeing allowed painterly effects and reserved white areas to appear in the otherwise bright blue silk. A date of the early nineteenth century is suggested by the concentration of design around the skirt and lower edge of the sleeves. The understated effect of the unembellished design and the bucolic subject would have been considered elegant and fashionable during that period. HG



110

Fireman's jacket with design of hero

Paste-resist dye on
plain-weave cotton, quilted
131.9 x 124.4 (51⁷/₈ x 49)
Tokyo National Museum

- Firemen's jackets were part of an ensemble for firefighting that included a hood with a shielded opening, trousers, and gloves. Constructed for flexibility and strength, the T-shaped jackets have multiple layers of fabric

quilted together with vertical rows of heavy cotton thread. These padded garments protected the wearer from falling debris and when soaked in water guarded against heat and flames. The crest of the firefighting troop was visible on the exterior of a jacket, but after the flames were doused, the garment could be turned inside out to reveal a strong and easily readable hand-painted design.

The figure painted on the inside of this jacket appears to be the priest Mongaku, who had fallen in love with a married woman and tragically murdered her, mistaking her in the night for her husband. In atonement he

became a priest, and his most famous act of austerity was standing under the icy cascade of Nachi Waterfall. He froze to death under the falls but was brought back to life by the Buddhist deity Fudō Myōō. Mongaku is often pictured holding the coiled rope of Fudō and a bell, as this figure does. The frozen wavelets support the identification of this figure as Mongaku. Perhaps firemen who wore this design were calling on Mongaku's determination as well as Fudō's mercy in their struggle against the flames. HG





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111

Fireman's jacket with design of waves and dragon

Paste-resist dye on plain-weave cotton, quilted
81.9 x 94 (32¹/₄ x 37)
Tokyo National Museum

- The most powerful of all supernatural animals in the Sino-Japanese pantheon, the dragon is here pictured in the Japanese manner, with a camel-like head, flaming beard, deer antlers, demon eyes, oxlike ears, a snake's body, and carp's scales. As he swoops down from above on magnificent batlike wings, flames emanate from his body. Stylized striated waves curl up toward the dragon for a watery collision at the center.

The dragon came in four varieties: protector of gods, ruler of rain and wind, protector of dwellings and producer of water sources, and lord of precious stones and metals. In this design the dragon's breath becomes clouds that pour forth rain to aid the fireman. HG

112

Yoshisada
Fireman's jacket with design of dragon and tiger

Paste-resist dye on plain-weave cotton, quilted, eye-appliquéd with wool and woven gold metallic thread, outlined with couched gold metallic thread
90 x 126 (35³/₈ x 49⁵/₈)
Tokyo National Museum

- The tiger was considered the king of beasts in East Asian culture. Embodying wisdom and resourcefulness as well as strength, when paired with the rain-making spiritual dragon, it became a symbol of terrestrial power. By wearing a jacket with the emblems of both creatures, the fireman appealed to all universal forces, celestial and terrestrial, to come to his assistance. HG

113

Ichieisei Yoshitsuya (1822 – 1866)
Fireman's jacket with design of thunder god

Paste-resist dye on plain-weave cotton, quilted, eye-appliquéd with wool and woven gold metallic thread, outlined with couched gold metallic thread
94 x 121.2 (37 x 47³/₄)
Tokyo National Museum

- The fireman who wore this jacket called on the wild intensity of the god of thunder and lightning, Raijin or Raiden, whose joints and muscles are stylized in cloudlike patterns that evoke his strength. Dressed in tiger-skin pants and leggings (leopard spots were attributed to female tigers at the time), the thunder god wears a cloud-pattern robe designed after imperial dragon robes of China, and beats on a circle of connected drums to drive away evildoers. Emanating around him are pale red streaks of lightning with misty clouds swirling between bolts. HG

Ornament • Samurai • Work • Religion and Festivals • Travel, Landscape, and Nature • Entertainment

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Buddhism in the Edo period

**Old Worlds,
New Visions:
Religion
and Art in
Edo Japan**

ROBERT T. SINGER

has been misunderstood, until very recently, as a religion in the grip of intellectual, spiritual, and moral decline.¹ This view, advanced by modern historians, seems to mirror that found in Edo-period literature, in the comic tales by such popular authors as Ihara Saikaku (1623 – 1693) or in the pronouncements of such social critics as Kumazawa Banzan (1619 – 1691).² Governmental and ideological restraints may also have contributed to the historians' perception of moribund spirituality within Edo religious culture. In an effort to eradicate Christianity, for example, the shogunate legislated that all Japanese households register at Buddhist temples, with the result that the clergy came to be seen more as agents of the government than as ministers to the people. To support this costly system of temples, impoverished peasants were required to contribute to the upkeep of the local temple, leading to widespread resentment of the priestly class' increasing wealth and power. Government control was extended to the internal regulation of Buddhist institutions, enforcing a hierarchical organization of temples along sectarian lines and overseeing both the scholarly and ritual activities of the priesthood. In the popular literature of the time the priesthood was described as consisting of unpromising offspring who were sent off to monasteries at an early age. At the intellectual level Buddhism came under intense ideological scrutiny from emergent schools of thought such as Neo-Confucianism and Nativism (Kokugaku), as well as from a

new skepticism informed by European empirical traditions.³ Contemporary historians who wish to break with the polemics of past centuries, however, need only raise their eyes from the textual to the visual evidence of religion in Edo Japan.

The works of art exhibited here offer a powerful argument for the complexity, strength, and diversity of religious, and particularly Buddhist, culture in the Edo period. In both subject matter and style the art reflects a deep appreciation of religious traditions but also displays a remarkable degree of innovation. This inventiveness, a playfulness that borders at times on the burlesque, both requires and assumes a profound familiarity with artistic conventions. The more familiar an artist’s chosen convention is to the viewer, the more humorous the parody or takeoff (cats. 120, 121). Orthodoxy and irony, conservatism and reform, are often combined within a single work. Some Edo artists returned to ancient forms or searched for a lost purity or intensity of expression, which governmental and Buddhist institutions sought to control. Perhaps in reaction, syncretic preachers emerged as a social force. They drew large urban followings, and mass pilgrimages attracted enormous and often ecstatic crowds, made up of all social classes, to distant temples and shrines. The popular culture of Edo Japan, in which religion played no small part, exhibited an unruly vitality.

For the preceding thousand years, from the sixth to the sixteenth century, Japanese art had been religious in character, commissioned for use and display by an aristocratic, warrior, and clerical elite. Religiosity was explicit in Buddhist sculpture and painting, while it was implicit in narrative handscrolls. Handscrolls frequently included genre or secular scenes, but the stories themselves were usually religious in nature, based on the creation story of a temple or the life of an eminent priest. In the Edo period constraints on the production of religious art began to loosen, artistic personalities began to emerge, and the audience became increasingly diverse. In earlier periods Zen art had been created primarily by trained artists, while in the Edo period charismatic monks produced ink paintings and calligraphy that were less symbols of enlightenment than expressions of gratitude given to temple patrons in exchange for their monetary contributions. Paintings of shrine festivals served as valued souvenirs for wealthy travelers, treasured emblems of family origin, or commodities offered in the negotiation of regional marriages (see cat. 138). The uses and motivation for traditional religious art had expanded remarkably. Religion, and the arts in which it took form, became popularized in radically new ways.

cat. 138
Tsushima Festival,
seventeenth century,
detail from an eight-panel
screen; ink, color,
and gold on paper,
160.8 x 496 (63 1/4 x 195 1/4),
Private Collection,
Kyoto

BUDDHISM,
THE CENTRAL
COSMOLOGY

A type of painting known as *rokudōe* (see cat. 114) depicts the “six realms” of transmigration, representing a religious world view that reaches back to the earliest forms of Japanese Buddhism. This Indian concept of Buddhist rebirth remained, even into the Edo period, a central religious cosmology.⁴ Such imagery — encompassing the realms of gods, humans, animals, fighting demons, hungry ghosts, and the denizens of a variety of hells — was often complemented by images of buddhas and bodhisattvas who offered a way out of the cycle of suffering.

The *rokudōe* included here depict violent extremes. With the exception of a merciful bodhisattva who raises a single unfortunate from the depths of his punishment, the scrolls are otherwise preoccupied with the punitive consequences of karma. Those who have killed others are reborn as demons, condemned to a violent existence; those who have overindulged their desires are reborn as hungry ghosts whose cravings remain forever unsated; and those who have committed any of a





cat. 114
Scenes of Hell, c. 1849,
two hanging scrolls
from set;
ink and color on paper,
each 157 x 87 (61 3/4 x 34 1/4),
Chōtokuji, Tokyo

multitude of Buddhist sins undergo forms of torture that would exhaust even Dante's imagination. The function of these paintings, as illustrations in the sermons of popular preachers, helps to explain their degree of dramatic and even violent excess.⁵ Although there is little new here in terms of doctrinal content, the fascination with the fantastic and the grotesque, the sheer pleasure taken in the spectacular, belongs very much to the urban culture of display that distinguished the era.

A similar sense of cosmic drama and visual extravagance is found in the Rakan sculpture from Rakanji (cat. 115) and in Kano Kazunobu's *Five Hundred Rakan* paintings (cat. 116). The cult of the Five Hundred Rakan was an Edo phenomenon. Although the iconography was known to Japanese artists of the Kamakura (1185 – 1333) and Muromachi (1392 – 1573) periods who studied Song-dynasty Chinese paintings, the cult gained momentum in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The term *rakan* (Sanskrit: *arhat*) refers to a disciple of the Buddha, and the group of five hundred indicates those, described in the opening chapter of the Lotus Sutra, who achieved instantaneous enlightenment upon hearing the Buddha preach at India's Vulture Peak. The popularity of the cult was due to a compounded exoticism. These legendary sages of ancient India, their curiously foreign features and respective

cat. 115
Shōun Genkei,
Two Rakan, c. 1695,
wood,
85 (33 1/2) high,
Rakanji, Tokyo



supernormal powers depicted in explicit detail, represented, not unlike the Europeans in Nagasaki, a distinctive class of enlightened barbarians. Brought to Japan by Chinese monks of the Ōbaku Zen sect who were fleeing the collapse of the Ming dynasty, the rakan cult's distinctively continental qualities appealed to the Edo populace. Portrayed in painting and statuary, rakan were enshrined in temples and in outdoor settings across Japan. Pilgrims and tourists flocked to life-size groupings of these sacred figures, arranged in sculptural dioramas, for worship and for entertainment. In addition to prayers and offerings, visitors enjoyed the game of finding, in the physiognomy of the vast saintly lineup, faces that reminded them of personal acquaintances. Toward the end of Saikaku's *Life of an Amorous Woman* the heroine, now an aged prostitute, finds herself at Daiunji, a temple on the western outskirts of Kyoto that housed one such collection. After taking part in the ritual recitation of the Buddha's name, she then identifies from among the statues of the Five Hundred Rakan those who resemble many of her past lovers.⁶ Visitors to the Rakanji, or the Temple of the Five Hundred Arhats, at the eastern edge of the city of Edo, could not only admire an enormous tableau of the Buddha preaching the *Lotus Sutra* to the assembled rakan (see cat. 115) but also visit in condensed form three of the country's famous pilgrimage circuits. Climbing, in circumambulatory fashion, the spiral ramps of the temple's unusual three-storied Turbo Hall (Szaedō), pilgrims passed one hundred statues of the Bodhisattva Kannon, copies of the images from the thirty-three-station pilgrimages of the Chichibu, Bantō, and Saikoku regions, and were rewarded with a panoramic view from the upper veranda.⁷ This remarkable urban vista, from what was perhaps the city's tallest ascendable building, was a delight to pilgrims and tourists alike and was celebrated in Edo's illustrated guidebooks and in the popular prints of Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849).

The religious art of Soga Shōhaku (1730–1781) bears a typically Edo combination of the traditional, the devotional, the popular, and the bizarre. The individual subjects of Shōhaku's *Demon and Dōji* (cat. 117) belong to the familiar cast of Buddhist characters that appear in much earlier Buddhist painting. But the combination seen here is rare, taken from an apocryphal source outside of the Buddhist canon. Their treatment as well, an unusual mixture of the humorous and the erotic, signals something decidedly different. It is as if the traditional figures of Buddhist iconography have left the confines of the temples and entered the public sphere, into a brave new world in which the modes of representation were far less circumscribed, open to a playful experimentation that can approach, as with Shōhaku's *Daoist Immortals* (cat. 119), the realm of parody.⁸ *A Buddhist Priest Warding off a Demon* (cat. 118) by Hokusai, whose vast corpus includes more drama, parody, and piety than most Edo artists, also blends the traditional with the fantastic. A priest is seated in meditation with his only weapon, a roll of Buddhist scripture, raised before him; he uses his great spiritual powers to subdue his demonic foe. While this portrait may seem, to the modern viewer at least, more that of a superhero of *manga* (Japanese comic books) or *anime* (animated cartoons), it is also indebted to a long tradition of visual hagiography. Hokusai's painting can be seen as a popular continuation of the narrative scrolls of earlier centuries that chronicled and celebrated the miraculous powers of Buddhist saints.

It should not be surprising that the most sacred image of Buddhist hagiography became a favored topic of parody in Edo religious art. The scene of the Buddha's death, or *parinirvana*, traditionally depicts Shakyamuni lying on his right side in a grove of sala trees surrounded by all form of beings grieving his passage (fig. 1). The leaves of the trees that shade the Buddha turn white in mourning, and the Buddha's mother, Lady Maya, even descends from the heavens to witness the event. Based in the Mahayana sutras as well as on the liturgical texts of medieval clerics, the iconography of the

cat. 117
Soga Shōhaku,
Demon and Dōji,
hanging scroll; ink and
color on paper,
170.3 x 124.6 (67 x 49),
Keishōji, Mie





fig. 1
Hanabusa Itchō
Parinirvana of the Buddha,
eighteenth century,
hanging scroll;
ink and color on paper,
62.6 x 46.1 (24⁵/₈ x 18¹/₈),
The Clark Family Collection,
Hanford, California



cat. 120
Hanabusa Itchō,
Parinirvana of Ariwara no Narihira,
hanging scroll;
ink and color on paper,
78.5 x 48 (30⁷/₈ x 18⁷/₈),
Tokyo National Museum

parinirvana was standardized in the more than forty extant pre-Edo Japanese versions of the scene that date from as early as the eleventh century. A number of Edo versions, however, recast this scriptural scene with less canonical cult figures. The revered poet Matsuo Bashō, for example, became the subject of one nirvana scene, and the passing of the popular kabuki actor Arashi Kitsuzaburō was similarly commemorated.⁹ A painting by Hanabusa Itchō (cat. 120), indicates the lengths to which the model was stretched. Pictured here in place of Shakyamuni is Ariwara no Narihira (825 – 880), the idealized courtly lover in the *Tales of Ise*, renowned for his poetic and libidinal pursuits. Instead of the Buddha's grief-struck disciples, women of a variety of social and religious statuses mourn their collective loss. Such a humorous visual pun, replacing the religious with the ribald, suggests the irreverent possibilities of the age.

A parinirvana painting by Itō Jakuchū (1716 – 1800) shares the same joke but reveals a more subtle and even devotional sense of humor (cat. 121). Here the canonical scene of the Buddha's death is portrayed

cat. 121
 Itō Jakuchū,
Vegetable parinirvana,
 c. 1780, hanging scroll;
 ink on paper,
 181.7 x 96.1 (30 1/2 x 18 7/8),
 Kyoto National Museum



entirely in vegetables: Shakyamuni is represented as a giant radish, the sala trees as cornstalks, the mournful followers as a varied agricultural array. Although Jakuchū’s version could be seen as more sacrilegious than Itchō’s, its careful mimesis suggests a genre closer to allegory than farce. It has been suggested that this painting is more than a simple parody. Jakuchū managed his family’s wholesale vegetable business until he retired to dedicate his time entirely to painting. He was not only a committed vegetarian but also a self-identified Buddhist who often appended the term *koji*, “Buddhist layman” to his signature. This work, like many of his others, may in fact have been donated by the artist to his family temple, perhaps to commemorate the death of his brother in 1792,¹⁰ or the anniversary of the death of his mother.¹¹ In any event, the impact of this painting depends on the viewer’s intimate knowledge of the conventional image combined with Jakuchū’s careful attention to iconographic detail and his supremely confident brushwork.

THE
PRIESTLY
ARTS

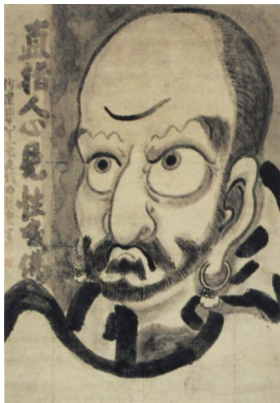
The artistic productions of Edo priests reflect a similar fluidity between art and religion. Clerics such as Hakuin Ekaku (1685 – 1769), Sengai Gibon (1750 – 1837), and Jiun Onkō (1718 – 1804) clearly saw a continuity between Buddhist practice and artistic expression. Although their remarkable ink paintings and calligraphy, referred to by the modern term *Zenga* (Zen pictures), have sometimes been described as unencumbered by cultural convention or as spontaneous expressions of the enlightened mind, the lives and the writings of these painter-priests call into question so idealized a view. *Zenga* were often created as tokens of gratitude for monetary gifts by temple patrons. They were usually not, as often suggested by modern devotees of Zen art or tea ceremony practitioners, “aids to meditation” or “symbols of enlightenment.” That *Zenga* came to be treasured over the centuries as traces of the master’s brush is testament to their power and significance to the owner, but it should not be assumed that they played an important role in the teaching that took place between master and student. The most rigorous Zen teachers have always shown a strong distrust of “artistic” didactic means such as painting, calligraphy, poetry, and even language itself. This is not to say that *Zenga* do not have high artistic merit, in spite of their original function and the fact that their makers were not trained artists. Indeed their power derives in part from these circumstances. If one is to interpret their brushwork in terms of their religiosity, then one needs to ask first about the specific beliefs and practices to which they subscribed. The intellectual and biographical complexity of individuals such as Hakuin and Jiun present a challenge to any simplistic understanding of Edo Buddhism as either atrophied or monolithic.

In many ways the life of Hakuin exemplifies the career of a serious Buddhist monk, Zen or otherwise, during the Edo period. Like many others, he started early and studied under a succession of teachers, moving freely from one to the next, continually searching for the appropriate guide to the next stage in his development. In his avoidance of the trappings of wealth and power he typified the great Zen monks of the time.¹² For the most part he stayed away from the massive Zen monasteries of Kyoto and Kamakura with their ties to wealthy patrons and government leaders. He revived a small temple in the countryside near his birthplace, Shōinji near Mount Fuji, where he had received his first vows and where he lived most of the time.

Although Hakuin is one of a number of Edo-period Zen priests, including Bankei Yōtaku and Suzuki Shōsan, who addressed Zen teachings to the everyday concerns of the laity, he was not a social reformer by any means. The content of his teaching was, like that of Bankei and Shōsan, religiously syncretic, politically conservative, and supportive of the social status quo. His writings, for example,



cat. 123
Hakuin Ekaku,
Daitō Kokushi,
hanging scroll; ink on paper,
131 x 56.3 (51 x 22),
Eisei Bunko Foundation,
Tokyo



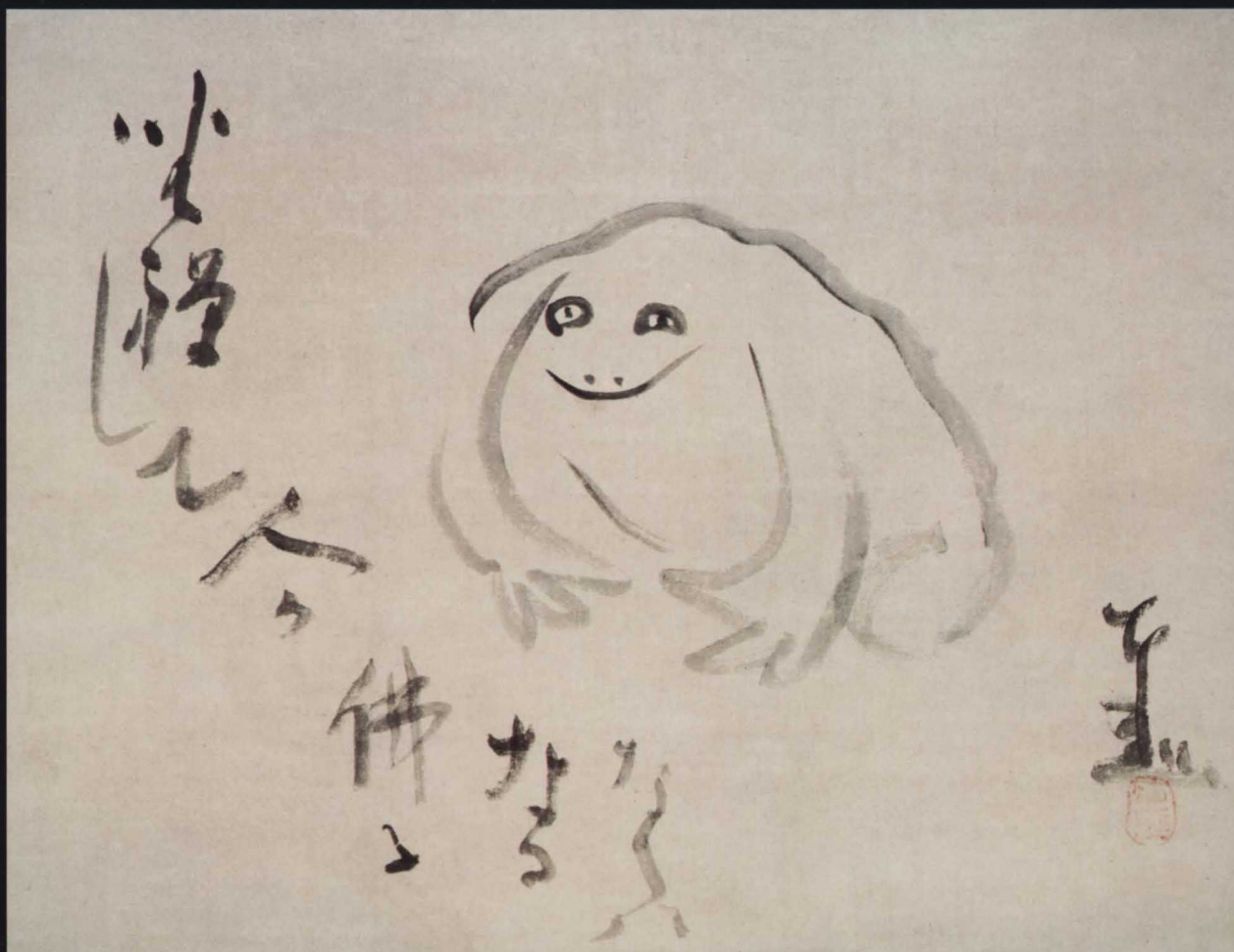
cat. 124
Hakuin Ekaku,
Daruma,
hanging scroll; ink on paper,
134.2 x 91.8 (52⁷/₈ x 36¹/₈),
Seikenji, Shizuoka

contain many letters of advice to various feudal lords. In them Hakuin relates cautionary tales, extols conventional Confucian virtues of governance, and praises the meditative powers of his samurai patrons.¹³ For his other lay followers Hakuin composed popular religious songs, compiled miracle tales, and encouraged all — samurai, monk, and commoner — to recite Buddhist incantations to bring health and longevity.

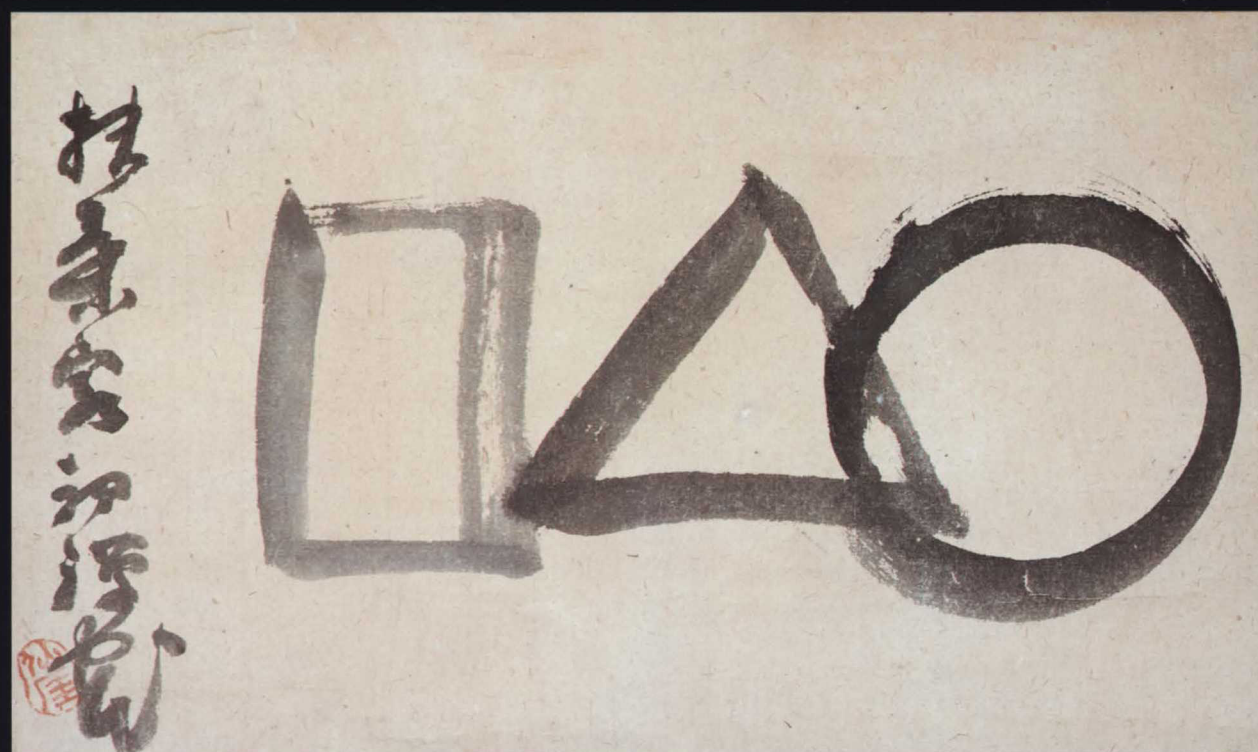
Hakuin's historical importance, however, is in his role as the revitalizer of the practice of Zen. He is revered as the restorer of the Rinzai sect; indeed all Rinzai monks today trace their lineage back to him. His is the only surviving Rinzai tradition. While Hakuin's paintings often exhibit humor, irreverence is absent from his choice of subject matter in the two paintings exhibited here (cats. 123, 124). Daruma, the Japanese name for the legendary monk Bodhidharma, who is said to have brought Zen from India to China, is claimed by all followers of the Zen school as the tradition's first patriarch.¹⁴ The subject of Hakuin's other portrait is a similarly patriarchal figure. Daitō Kokushi, the posthumous title granted Shūhō Myōchō, was the Kamakura master to whom Hakuin traced his own lineage. Although Hakuin started painting late in his life, his art shows a distinct stylistic evolution: both his calligraphy and painting progress from thin and spidery lines (cat. 123) to ones of remarkable boldness and thickness (cat. 124). His final works are ropelike in their rounded volumetric line, all extraneous details omitted in an achievement of extreme simplicity.

Another premier Zenga painter of the Edo period is the monk Sengai Gibon. Like Hakuin, Sengai turned seriously to painting and calligraphy only late in life; in Sengai's case, it was after his retirement in 1811 from the abbacy of Shōfukuji in Kyushu, Japan's oldest Zen temple. Sengai too produced vast numbers of works, achieving a style even simpler, more cartoonlike than Hakuin's. His range of themes was likewise enormous, from depictions of Tang-period monks such as Hanshan and Shide (Japanese: Kanzan and Jittoku) to landscapes and Japanese folklore. Many of his themes were traditional, as were Hakuin's; it was in their execution and accompanying colophon that Sengai added a Zen didactic element, often with a touch of humor. The paintings, and particularly the calligraphy, vary greatly in style. His writing of Chinese phrases is loose, but his writing of Japanese attains a cursive casualness that is utterly unaffected. His two best-known works are seen here (cats. 125, 126). In a perfect marriage of image and text, the former displays both humor and the depth of a successful Zenga. The artist's grasp of the frog's essence is undergirded with layers of Zen meaning in the inscription. Perhaps the most famous of all Zenga, especially in the West, is the latter, *Circle, Triangle, Square*. Much has been written on this work, which resembles a Rorschach test in its ability to evoke a multiplicity of meanings, depending on the viewer. The monumentality of its three geometric forms suggests the elemental building blocks of the universe. Its appeal effortlessly crosses cultural barriers.

The Buddhism of Jiun is distinctive for its hybrid quality. Jiun in fact may be seen to represent both the reformist and syncretic tendencies in Edo religion. As a young boy Jiun received a Neo-Confucian education that contributed significantly to an early and passionate hatred of Buddhism and its clergy. Upon the death of his father, however, he entered a Shingon (Esoteric Buddhist) temple as a novice and was soon converted to the Buddhist path. Although an ordained priest of the Shingon sect, he was also a student and practitioner of Zen, training under a master of the Sōtō sect. Like Hakuin, Jiun placed a renewed emphasis on rules of monastic discipline (Sanskrit: *vinaya*; Japanese: *ritsu*). Yet he was also strongly influenced by the Ancient Learning (Kogaku) school of Edo Confucianism and wrote extensively on Shinto. This suprasectarianism culminated in the formation of a



cat. 125
Sengai Gibon,
Frog in Zen Meditation,
hanging scroll;
ink on paper,
40.3 x 53.8 (15⁷/₈ x 21¹/₈),
Idemitsu Museum
of Arts, Tokyo



cat. 126
Sengai Gibon,
Circle, Triangle, Square,
hanging scroll;
ink on paper,
28.4 x 48.1 (11¹/₈ x 18⁷/₈),
Idemitsu Museum
of Arts, Tokyo

movement known as the Vinaya of the True Dharma (Shōbōritsu), which advocated a return to the pure Buddhism of an idealized past, what Jiun called “Buddhism as it was when the Buddha was alive.” He was at once a fundamentalist who stressed the importance of monastic discipline, a scholar who mastered Sanskrit and compiled a thousand-fascicle Guide to Sanskrit Studies (Bongaku shinryō), and a popular preacher whose sermons to the laity emphasized the value of Buddhist social ethics to the family, business, and the state.

Jiun was most prolific during his final twenty-eight years, while he was in retirement at the small temple of Kōkiji in Kawachi. Known primarily as a calligrapher, he created work that is immediately recognizable for its expressionistic manner of conflating the variety of religious traditions he studied. In these two works (cats. 128, 129) Jiun shows his preference for bold large-scale characters; their strength is emphasized by contrast with the rest of the poem written to the left in each example. Both calligraphies display the “flying white” effect achieved by using a heavily but partially inked stiff-bristled brush. In the *Poem titled “Perseverance”* in particular one can discern the influence of Sanskrit, Jiun’s primary scholarly focus, in its muscular centripetal tension.

A fourth Buddhist figure during this period, also a religious professional, has left a huge and extraordinary corpus of works distributed in temples and shrines across the country. Enkū (1632–1695), an itinerant priest of the Tendai-affiliated school of mountain asceticism known as Shugendō, is said to have vowed to carve 120,000 Buddhist images as a form of religious practice. To date scholars have identified more than seven thousand examples of his work. Without the benefit of traditional artistic training, his tools limited to the hatchet and chisel, Enkū created powerful examples of religious statuary characterized by a purposefully unfinished, organic, and expressionistic appearance.¹⁵ While Enkū’s work has been sometimes likened to folk art, it shows none of the conservative reiteration usually associated with the folk tradition.¹⁶ His subjects include fewer orthodox Buddhist deities and more of those associated with folk religion, such as mother-and-child deities worshipped in the hope of easy childbirth and healthy children. Enkū’s work also shows Buddhist/Shinto interaction. Unrelated to the mainstream of Japanese Buddhist statuary of the Edo period, or even that of the Muromachi, Kamakura, or Heian (794–1185) periods, Enkū’s work finds its precedent within the orthodox vocabulary of Japanese Buddhist sculpture from the ninth and tenth centuries, before the development of the joined-wood (yosegi-zukuri) technique replaced carving from a single log.¹⁷ The finlike projections at either side of the garments depicted in *Two Kongōshin figures* (cat. 130) are strongly reminiscent of bronze sculpture from the Asuka-Hakuhō period (mid-sixth century to 710), suggesting familiarity with this early tradition.

Although stylistic similarities may seem to exist between Enkū’s carving and the sometimes wild and playful brushwork of Hakuin and Sengai or the dynamic calligraphy of Jiun, a disparity remains between the traditions that inform their works. Unlike the monastic painters, whose seemingly unstudied style was the result of a great deal of learning, Enkū appears to have been far less connected to the institutional centers of the religious and cultural elite. He remained a Shugendō practitioner throughout his life, traveling from his home province in central Japan to regions as distant as the northern island of Hokkaido to undertake religious austerities in sacred mountains. Enkū’s work may thus be better viewed within the tradition of the simple hatchet-carved (*nata-bori*) statues or chiseled-rock images (*sekibutsu*) created throughout Japan by anonymous Shugendō practitioners.¹⁸ Because Shugendō was a tradition that combined elements of Esoteric Buddhism, Daoism, shamanism,



cat. 130
Enkū, Two *Kongōshin* figures,
cedar, 220 (86 $\frac{5}{8}$) high,
Iisanji, Gifu

and a variety of local cults, it was proscribed by the Meiji government in their attempt to eradicate religious syncretism, to regulate and persecute Buddhist institutions, and to construct Shinto as a religion of the state.¹⁹ One of the effects of this late nineteenth-century policy was the obscuring of the central role of Shugendō in the religious life of Edo village society. Shugendō practitioners performed rituals for safe pregnancy and childbirth, rites of passage for children and adolescents, agricultural ceremonies, exorcisms of malevolent spirits, divination, funerals, and memorial services.²⁰ In this period more than ninety percent of the villages of northern Japan, a part of the country in which Enkū was active for a number of years, relied on Shugendō priests for the majority of their religious needs.²¹ As can be seen by the following account, written in the early eighteenth century by Hasegawa Tadamune, governor of Hida province, Enkū was revered more as a holy man than as an artist:

People in the mountains first saw him during the Empo Era, although it is not known exactly when he came to live in the deep mountains of this country. He carried a wood-cutting knife and was always carving Buddha images and dedicating them to the places where he stayed. Someone asked him where he was from, but he would not answer. He only said "I have been living in the mountains and carving Buddha images for many years to venerate the gods

of each region.” In these mountains there were places that the common people thought were inhabited by demons, where they were always afraid to go. But after Enkū’s instruction they went to see and they were not harmed.

Enkū never asked for clothes or food. When people gave him food, he did not take things to boil; he only wanted uncooked food to eat. Later, he came down and stayed at the villages in the forest where he saw people and pointed out the evil that was in their hearts and minds, and warned them that they should practice good deeds. Like a divine being, he was never incorrect. For that reason, people had a great fear of him and worshipped him.²²

An artist often paired with Enkū is a sculptor named Mokujiki Gyōdō (1718 – 1810), whose career is similar to that of Enkū in many ways. This artist is sometimes confused with the less well known Mokujiki Byakudō (1750 – 1825), whose work is close to that of his teacher Gyōdō. The name both artists share, Mokujiki (literally “wood eater”), indicates their vow to eat only uncooked fruit and nuts as part of an extreme ascetic discipline. Gyōdō, like Enkū, traveled around Japan constantly; beginning at the age of sixty he carved more than a thousand sculptures. His works are composed of gentle rounded forms, often rhythmically layered, imparting a unique warmth and fullness to the figure. Many of his sculptures bear a benevolent, blissful facial expressions (cat. 132). Byakudō followed his teacher’s style, but most of his sculptures are of folk deities such as Ebisu and Daikokuten (cat. 133), two of the seven gods of good fortune.

FESTIVAL
IMAGES

Images of annual festivals, such as those of the Gion, Hie, Sumiyoshi, and Tsushima Shrines (cats. 134, 136 – 139), offer some of the most detailed representations we have of the place of religion in Edo culture. They afford concrete views of the elaborate and explicitly popular celebrations of the day. Festivals consisted of processions in which the sacred palanquins (*mikoshi*) of the deities were paraded through the streets as well as contests such as boat races and other special matches, conceived as oracles whose answer depended on which individual or team won. Festival paintings depict not only the ceremonial activities performed at famous shrines — the identities of participants and observers, the particulars of architecture and topography, the inventory of ritual and material culture finely drawn and held still against the passage of time — but the degree to which such religious activity exceeded the boundaries of these sacred sites. It was literally woven through urban life. Some festivals, such as that of the Hie Shrine, were associated with the ruling class; when the Tokugawa moved to the city of Edo, an Edo branch of the original shrine on Lake Biwa (cat. 136) was established to serve among the tutelary deities for the shogunal family (cat. 139). Other festivals, like Tsushima in Owari, seem to have had a popular base in addition to shogunal support. The fluid nature of festival patronage is seen in Kyoto’s Gion festival, established by the court in 869: it was overseen by the Muromachi shogunate prior to the late fifteenth-century Ōnin War, but ceased with the collapse of society into wartime chaos; it was then revived as a merchant-class spectacle during the early sixteenth century.

Festival screens adopted the elevated vantage point, panoramic vision, orthogonal architecture, seasonal and cyclical iconography, and attention to narrative and anecdote that point to their origins in the native storytelling traditions of Yamatoe. These gilded, colorful, intricately detailed outgrowths of the brilliant Momoyama style from the latter half of the sixteenth century have an obvious stylistic relationship with urban panoramas such as *Amusements along the Riverside at Shijō* (cat. 231). They are most likely “blowups” of festival scenes depicted within the larger urban views known as *Scenes In and Around Kyoto (rakuchū-rakugaizu)*, which preceded their appearance: festival screens became an



cat. 136
Hie Sanno Festival,
detail from a pair of six-panel
screens; ink, color, and
gold on paper,
each 154.5 x 354.5 (60⁷/₈ x 139¹/₂),
Konchi'in, Kyoto

independent subject matter in the Momoyama period. Festival screens are also indebted to the cultic paintings known as shrine and temple pilgrimage mandalas (*shaji sankei mandara*), themselves descendants of the more formal portraits of sacred space seen in thirteenth-century portrayals of famous sites such as Kumano or Kasuga. Like these mandalas, festival screens represent a kind of persuasive spiritual cartography, but one in which religious space, no longer confined to traditional institutional boundaries, spreads beyond the gates of the shrines, affirming a continuity between the sacred and the profane.

This religious populism is, as we have seen, inherent in the content of these images. They make tangible the mass involvement in religious life: the ritual specialists and ordinary townspeople, the men and women, the young and old, the warriors, farmers, artisans, merchants, and entertainers. In the Hie screens, for example (cat. 136), a visible syncretism is apparent in the participation of white-robed priests from the Shinto shrine and dark-clothed monks from the Buddhist temple of Enryakuji with which it is allied. The Gion screens (cat. 134) show a rite that began as a prophylaxis against pestilence and developed into a ritualized contest in the urban display of wealth, with neighborhood organizations of the merchant class vying with each other in the sumptuousness of their decorations. Nowhere is the proliferation of sacred topography more evident than in the case of the Sumiyoshi Shrine, which, by the Edo period, had established two thousand branches throughout the country. The screens showing the festival of the Sumiyoshi Shrine (cat. 137), whose gods catered to the unlikely mix of seamen and poets, follow the procession of four deities in their sacred palanquins, moving from the shrine complex through the orderly streets of the prosperous port city of Sakai. Festivals mingle the ancient with the up-to-date: the protection of the gods of the Tsushima Shrine against summer plague is invoked on the festooned sacred boats by the display of the crowd-pleasing mechanical dolls that were all the rage during the Edo period (cat. 138).

Festival screens are often remarkably faithful to the key sites and activities of the particular festival portrayed. The topography, relative position of the shrine or temple and other buildings, and the number of floats and their decoration and deployment are rendered accurately. This is true even in cases where the painting, executed in Kyoto, is of a festival that occurs at some distance, such as the Tsushima Festival (cat. 138): early examples were produced by someone who observed the two-day event and made meticulous visual notes to produce such an accurate record. In fact, some festivals performed today can be matched closely to the scenes found on screens painted three centuries ago. Although depictions of food sellers, entertainers, and even fights are occasionally somewhat generic in character and employed on screens of different festivals, these screens are masterpieces of near-documentary detail combined with richly evocative atmosphere.



cat. 137
Sumiyoshi Festival,
detail from a pair of
six-panel screens;
ink, color, and gold on paper,
97.5 x 269 (38³/₈ x 105⁷/₈),
The Sakai Museum,
Osaka

- 1 The most prominent exponent of this view in modern Japanese scholarship was Tsuji Zennosuke in *Nihon Bukkyō shi* (Tokyo, 1952–1955), especially vols. 9 and 10, the concluding chapter of which is entitled “The Decline of Buddhism and the Corruption of the Clergy.” This view, reiterated in much subsequent Japanese scholarship, is to be found as well in the standard historical surveys of George Sansom, Masaharu Anesaki, George Eliot, and Joseph Kitagawa, among others. For a critical response see Paul B. Watt, “Jin Sonja (1718–1804): A Response to Confucianism within the Context of Buddhist Reform,” in Peter Nosco, ed., *Confucianism and Tokugawa Culture* (Princeton, 1984), 188–214.
- 2 The Neo-Confucian Banzan complained of “a faithless Buddhism” in which monks “freely indulge in worldly affairs without concern for either discipline or scholarship” (Watt 1984, 190).
- 3 For an analysis of this critique see James Edward Ketelaar, *Of Heretics and Martyrs in Meiji Japan: Buddhism and Its Persecution* (Princeton, 1990), 3–42.
- 4 For two different understandings of the influence of this basic Buddhist picture of the world in Japan, see William R. LaFleur, *The Karma of Words: Buddhism and the Literary Arts in Medieval Japan* (Berkeley, 1983), 26–59; and Barbara Ruch, “Coping with Death: Paradigms of Heaven and Hell and the Six Realms in Early Literature and Painting,” in James H. Sanford et al., eds., *Flowing Traces: Buddhism in the Literary and Visual Arts of Japan* (Princeton, 1992), 93–130.
- 5 For a discussion of the role of such paintings in popular preaching, see Tatsurō Akai, “The Common People and Painting,” in Chie Nakane and Shinzaburō Ōishi, eds., *Tokugawa Japan: The Social and Economic Antecedents of Modern Japan* (Tokyo, 1990), 167–191.
- 6 Ivan Morris, trans., *The Life of an Amorous Woman and Other Writings* (New York, 1963), 203–208.
- 7 Timon Screech, “The Strangest Place in Edo: The Temple of the Five Hundred Arhats,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 48, no. 4 (Winter 1993), 407–428.
- 8 Tsuji Nobuo, *Playfulness in Japanese Art* (Lawrence, Kans., 1986), 69–70.
- 9 Yoshiaki Shimizu, “Multiple Commemorations: The Vegetable Nehan of Itō Jakuchū,” in Sanford et al. 1992, 207–208. See also Haruo Shirane, *Traces of Dreams: Landscape, Cultural Memory, and the Poetry of Bashō* (Stanford, 1998), 35–37, on the apotheosis of the poet. The parinirvana of Arashi is reproduced in Tsuji 1986, 66. A related development was the proliferation of *ukiyo*e death portraits memorializing famous actors, published as soon as they died and marketed to their fans.
- 10 Shimizu 1992, 231. While radically different in style and technique, Jakuchū’s famous series of thirty paintings entitled *Colorful Realm of Living Beings* was similarly produced for Shōkokuji, a Buddhist temple in Kyoto. When he dedicated the set to the temple, Jakuchū also included a more traditional Buddhist triptych.
- 11 Money L. Hickman and Yasuhiro Satō, *The Paintings of Jakuchū*, Asia Society Galleries (New York, 1989), 164–165.
- 12 Hakuin’s description of his first enlightenment experience (*satori* or *kenshō*) is one of the most vivid in Zen literature: “Night and day I did not sleep; I forgot to eat and rest. Suddenly a great doubt manifested itself before me. It was as though I were frozen solid in the midst of an ice sheet extending tens of thousands of miles. A purity filled my heart and I could neither go forward nor retreat. To all intents and purposes I was out of my mind. ...This state lasted several days. Then I chanced to hear the sound of the temple bell and I was suddenly transformed. It was as if a sheet of ice had been smashed....All my former doubts vanished as though ice had melted away. In a loud voice I call out, ‘Wonderful, wonderful.’” See Philip B. Yampolsky, trans., *The Zen Master Hakuin: Basic Writings* (New York, 1971), 118.
- 13 Yampolsky 1971, 69.
- 14 On this central figure of the Chan/Zen pantheon, see Bernard Faure, “Bodhidharma as Textual and Religious Paradigm,” *History of Religions* 25, no. 3 (1986), 187–198.
- 15 Donald F. McCallum, “The Sculpture of Enkū,” parts 1–2, *Oriental Art* 20 (1974), 174–191, 400–413.
- 16 McCallum 1974, 411.
- 17 McCallum 1974, 175.
- 18 Sawa Ryūken, “Shugendō Art,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 16, nos. 2–3 (1989), 203–204.
- 19 Ketelaar 1990, 50–51.
- 20 Helen Hardacre, “Conflict between Shugendō and the New Religions of Bakumatsu Japan,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 21, nos. 2–3 (1994), 142–149.
- 21 Mizoguchi Komazō, “Tōhoku, Hokuiku-chihō ni okeru shūgen chakusai,” *Shūkyō kenkyū* 4, no. 4 (1943), 192–198.
- 22 Cited in Kazuaki Tanahashi, *Enkū: Sculptor of a Hundred Thousand Buddhas* (Boulder, Co., 1982), 107.

114
Scenes of Hell

c. 1849
Two hanging scrolls from a set; ink and color on paper
Each 157 x 87 (61³/₄ x 34¹/₄)
Chōtokuji, Tokyo

Illustrated page 208

• Buddhist paintings such as these (rokudōe), which depict the ways in which sentient beings are doomed to be reborn according to their deeds during their lifetime, served as useful didactic tools for the instruction of the believer. Usually made in sets of six, the two scrolls seen here are from a set of five, though it is known from a donation inscription on the back that there were originally six. The inscription is dated 1849, thus the scrolls were probably produced shortly before that time.

These two scrolls both depict aspects of the Buddhist hells. The right one includes such traditional scenes as the King of Hell deciding on the severity of a person’s punishment (center left) and the “black rope” or tightrope hell (at top). In the other the King of Hell is shown at the top, while hapless souls are tormented by dragons and ogres at the bottom.

Although these paintings are not by a highly trained painter, their very lack of refinement and sophistication, together with their contrasting inky black background and startling crimson, yellow, blue and green pigments, imparts a power to shock that is perfectly suited to the subject matter. They are closely related in spirit to the eruptions of folk Buddhism and other religious movements common among the masses at the end of the Edo period. RTS

115
Shōun Genkei (1648 – 1710)
Two Rakan

c. 1695
Wood
Height 85 (33¹/₂)
Rakanji, Tokyo

Illustrated page 209

• Paintings of rakan, disciples of the Buddha, became popular in China during the Song (960 – 1126) and Yuan (1279 – 1368) dynasties and were then copied in Japan. Sets of sixteen, eighteen, and five hundred rakan were often depicted in painting and sculpture. In Japan the cult of the Five Hundred Rakan was especially popular during the Edo period, indicating those described in the *Lotus Sutra* who achieved instantaneous enlightenment upon hearing the Buddha preach at Vulture Peak in India. The popularity of the rakan was partly due to their foreign appearance (large noses and prominent foreheads) and supernatural powers.

An array of rakan sculpture displayed within a temple hall was popularized by monks of the Ōbaku sect, the last Zen sect to reach Japan from China, in the seventeenth century. The two sculptures seen here are from what was the largest Ōbaku Zen temple in Edo, called Rakanji or Gohyaku Rakanji. Of the original 500 nearly life-sized sculptures, 305 still remain today, arranged in two six-tier groupings flanking the temple’s central image of Shaka preaching the *Lotus Sutra* on Vulture Peak. One can easily imagine the powerful effect such an overwhelming presence would have stirred in the viewer in the Edo period.

Shōun Genkai was the son of a Buddhist sculptor in Kyoto. He became a monk and was so moved by an assemblage of Rakan sculpture at a temple in Kyushu that he pledged to devote the rest of his life to carving such works. It took him nearly four years to complete the group of Five Hundred Rakan to which these two belong. RTS

116
Kano Kazunobu (1815 – 1863)
Five Hundred Rakan

c. 1854 – 1863
Two hanging scrolls from a set; ink and color on silk
Each 172.3 x 85.8 (67⁷/₈ x 33³/₄)
Zōjōji, Tokyo

• The cult of the Five Hundred Rakan, described in the previous entry, was expressed in painting as well as sculpture. Early Japanese depictions of rakan relied heavily on Chinese painting models, but in the Edo period greater experimentation took place. That rakan were traditionally shown in landscape settings or interiors with objects of daily life allowed the artist to break away from convention to a greater extent than with other Buddhist subjects.

In these two scrolls rakan peer down on two of the “six realms” of transmigration, the denizens of hell (left) and fighting demons (right). In the hell scenes the unfortunates beseech the rakan with outstretched arms for deliverance from the fearsome flaming breath of dragons and serpents. In the other scroll the rakan gaze down with varying expressions reflecting their highly individualistic responses to the violent scenes of carnage below.

Kano Kazunobu was born and raised in Edo and trained in the Kano school. These paintings, his greatest works, were produced late in his life between 1854 and 1863. In their shading and modeling techniques and use of vanishing point perspective, they reveal a heavy influence from western painting, which combines well with the intentional foreignness of the rakans’ expression, producing a weirdly successful, if slightly disturbing, amalgam. For this, and for the sheer ambition of the entire project, this set of paintings constitutes a prime example of a very late Edo religious expression. RTS



117
Soga Shōhaku (1730 – 1781)
Demon and Dōji

Hanging scroll; ink and color on paper
170.3 x 124.6 (67 x 49)
Keishōji, Mie

Illustrated page 211

• In this powerful painting a child representing the Buddha in a previous incarnation (dōji) is shown in an encounter with a ferocious demon, Indara. The child has removed his upper garment and is balanced precariously on a tree limb above the menacing but perhaps somewhat awed demon. This rare subject, taken from an early apocryphal source outside the Buddhist canon, clearly appealed to the painter’s interest in unusual subject matter. One of the great eccentrics of Edo-period painting, Soga Shōhaku gives his vivid imagination full rein in this startling vision. There is an erotic charge to the painting, which makes it difficult to imagine its being used in any didactic way by a priest for the edification of believers.

The brilliance of the contrasting primary colors only emphasizes the bizarre nature of the scene. Perhaps the finest of Shōhaku’s colored paintings, this work skillfully combines areas of broad color with Shōhaku’s characteristic ink brushwork. The color is applied in shaded washes more typical of ink painting; in Shōhaku’s oeuvre ink painting is by far the dominant mode. White pigment sprinkled over the picture’s surface suggests snow. RTS

118
Attributed to Katsushika Hokusai (1760 – 1849)
Buddhist Priest Warding off a Demon

c. 1845
Hanging scroll; ink and color on paper
150 x 240 (59 x 94 1/2)
Sōjiji, Tokyo

Illustrated page 37

• The subject of this large painting is a Buddhist priest practicing austerities in the face of formidable opposition from an enormous red demon who holds a sword and a rope. A terrified dog wrapped around a fungus-studded tree yelps at the fearsome apparition. Stars glitter against a lacquer black sky; bush clover and other autumn plants denote the season.

The priest has been identified in previous publications as Kūkai, also known as Kōbō Daishi (774 – 835), one of the giants of Japanese religious and cultural history, though there is no mention in his hagiography of an incident like that depicted here. After returning from religious studies in China in the early part of the Heian period (794–1185), he founded the Shingon sect of Japanese Esoteric Buddhism and began the construction of a monastic center on Mount Kōya that grew into one of the great monastery complexes of Japan. Hokusai was a student of Nichirensect teachings; it is possible that the priest depicted here is Nichiren (1222 – 1282), not Kūkai.

Originally mounted as a framed panel and meant to be hung under the eaves of a temple, this painting was remounted early in this century as a hanging scroll. It is unsigned; the attribution is based on a nearly identical composition in the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. There is yet another version in the Edoardo Chissone Museum of Oriental Art, Genoa. RTS

119
Soga Shōhaku (1730 – 1781)
Daoist Immortals

1764
Pair of six-panel screens; ink and color on paper
Each 163.2 x 364 (64 1/4 x 143 3/8)
Private Collection, Kyoto

• The subject of Daoist immortals, beings who had discovered the secret of long life, was a popular one in mid-Edo Japan at a time of particular fascination with Chinese legends and literature. A number of paintings on this theme provided models for Japanese artists. These included scenes of immortals flying over the oceans, riding flying carp, practicing austerities, and performing miraculous acts.

Even among the many bizarre works from Shōhaku’s productive career, this painting is shocking in its intensity and eccentricity. Exceedingly precise, even obsessive attention is paid to the facial expression, costume, and attributes of each immortal, running the gamut from fierce through maniacal to weirdly vapid. The startlingly bright colors of the immortals’ costumes are made even stronger by contrast with the largely ink landscape setting in which the figures are deployed. The figures appear at first glance to interact, but they rarely do. The centripetal forces surrounding the fearful dragon, the oddly faceted stone outcroppings, the perfectly regular curling wave, all these elements and more contribute to a painting that once seen is never forgotten.

In the two lengthy inscriptions Shōhaku states his age (thirty-five) and his claim that he is the tenth-generation descendant of Soga Jasoku (d. 1484), one of the greatest painters of the Muromachi period. RTS

次暉祐朝臣
白石近次郎
三十五歲筆







120
Hanabusa Itchō (1652 – 1724)
Parinirvana of Ariwara no Narihira

Hanging scroll; ink and color on paper
78.5 x 48 (30⁷/₈ x 18⁷/₈)
Tokyo National Museum

Illustrated page 212

• Ariwara no Narihira (825 – 880) was a celebrated poet of the early part of the Heian period. He is one of the Six Immortal Poets of the ninth century and one of the Thirty-six Immortal Poets who lived prior to the eleventh century. Much of the tenth-century *Tales of Ise* revolves around a figure associated with Narihira, and more than a third of the poems appearing in the work are said to be by him. His poetry is known for its strong emotional content, often involving passionate expressions of lost love.

Narihira is equally famous as a handsome lover whose affairs of the heart were numerous and widespread; his name even came to denote a comely appearance (*Narihirazukuri*). In this painting, uniquely Edo in its parodistic sentiment, Narihira is shown at his death in the classic guise of a nirvana of the Buddha painting (fig. 1, p. 212). The conventional depiction of this subject shows the Buddha lying on a jeweled bier in a grove of sala trees, surrounded by mourners of every description, from deities to unenlightened human beings and animals. Enlightened beings show less grief, as they possess a higher understanding of the nature of human existence, while other beings writhe in anguish.

In this classic example of Edo-period parody of a conventional theme, Narihira is shown on his deathbed surrounded by admirers, almost all of whom are women. Every social class is represented, from the lady in court robes just above him to the entertainers at the lower right. RTS

121
Itō Jakuchū (1716 – 1800)
Vegetable parinirvana

c. 1780
Hanging scroll; ink on paper
181.7 x 96.1 (71¹/₂ x 37⁷/₈)
Kyoto National Museum

Illustrated page 213

• To be understood, this extraordinary painting must first be compared to the classic parinirvana of the historical Buddha. Great numbers of such paintings were produced, often on a scale grand enough to be viewed by crowds, and they were displayed in temples on the fifteenth day of the second month to commemorate the Buddha's release from the cycle of rebirth.

In Jakuchū's painting fruits and vegetables have gathered for the Buddha's passing. The Buddha has been replaced with a giant white radish (*daikon*), the bier with a basket, and the customary sala trees with cornstalks. To represent the deities, followers, ordinary people, and animals usually shown, Jakuchū has used a wide variety of plants, including the eggplant, turnip, lotus, melon, lily, ginger, persimmon, and bamboo shoot, to name a few (see Hickman and Sato 1989, 164). At the far upper left appears a single quince, perhaps to represent the Buddha's mother, Lady Maya, descended from paradise.

The particular impact of this painting derives from the careful attention to iconographic detail and the skilled brushwork. Its meaning has naturally inspired much speculation. That Jakuchū was a wholesale green-grocer for many years is important if only to help explain the sure rendering of each fruit and vegetable. Although there is clearly an element of humor in the painting, there is also an underlying emotion of heartfelt religious passion. It has been persuasively suggested that this work was created in memory of a relative, perhaps Jakuchū's mother or brother. RTS

122
Itō Jakuchū (1716 – 1800)
Portrait of Baisaō

Hanging scroll; ink on paper
113.3 x 44.6 (44⁵/₈ x 17¹/₂)
Private Collection, Hyōgo

• The subject of this painting, Baisaō Kō Yūgai (1675 – 1763), was one of the great eccentrics of eighteenth-century Kyoto. An orphan who was reared in an Ōbaku sect Zen temple in Kyushu, he became chief priest of a temple before abandoning the monastic life. He then settled in Kyoto and became a seller and preparer of the steeped tea (*sencha*) used in a Chinese form of the tea ceremony. As shown here, he would carry his utensils from a pole slung across his shoulder, stopping to sell tea for a small charge to anyone who asked. Indeed his art name, Baisaō, literally means “old man who sells tea.” In one of his writings he explained that he preferred the humility of being a tea seller to his former position as a high-ranking prelate in a prosperous temple. His erudition and inquisitive nature drew many artists and intellectuals to him, and he became a focal point of the artistic community of Kyoto in the mid-eighteenth century.

Itō Jakuchū was another famed eccentric of the time, and a great admirer of Baisaō's learning and wisdom. At least four portraits of Baisaō by Jakuchū are known, and this is thought to be the earliest. Baisaō is shown crossing a bridge, carrying his tea utensils, and turning to look to his left. In Jakuchū's characteristic manner, the emphasis is on the subject's face: he is realistically portrayed with a grizzled appearance, a single tooth, and unkempt hair. His eyes reveal a wise and gentle nature. RTS



123

Hakuin Ekaku (1685 – 1768)
 Daitō Kokushi (Shūhō Myōchō)

Hanging scroll; ink on paper
 131 x 56.3 (51⁵/₈ x 22¹/₈)
 Eisei Bunko Foundation, Tokyo

• The venerated Zen master Daitō Kokushi (1282 – 1337; *kokushi* is a posthumous title meaning “national teacher”) lived for a time among the beggars who gathered under the Gojō Bridge in Kyoto. An exemplar of Zen disdain for wealth and power, Daitō preferred an anonymous life of poverty until he was cajoled into founding the monastery of Daitokuji by retired emperor Hanazono (1297 – 1348). In time Daitokuji grew into one of the largest and most lavishly appointed Zen temples of Kyoto, becoming a center for the Zen visual arts and later for the tea ceremony. One wonders what Daitō would have thought of this conspicuous display of wealthy patronage.

Like Hakuin, Daitō was known for the severity of his teaching, and Hakuin has depicted him here with an appropriately fierce expression. Daitō wears a peasant’s rain cape and hat, and he holds a sack, representing his meager material possessions. Hakuin must have had a particular regard for Daitō: his portraits of the Zen master show more care and detail than his paintings of other subjects.

Hakuin’s inscription reads, “Through their hardships the ancients attained great light. If you do not believe this, look well at this old man. If you give me the melon without using your hands, I will take it without using my feet.” The last sentence refers to a legend in which the emperor sent a messenger to find Daitō among the beggars and bring him back to court. Knowing that Daitō loved melons, the messenger held one out, asking if anyone could come and get it without using his feet. Daitō gave himself away by replying that the messenger should offer it without using his hands. Thus revealed, Hakuin was persuaded to attend the emperor. RTS



124

Hakuin Ekaku (1685 – 1768)

Daruma (Bodhidharma)

Hanging scroll; ink on paper

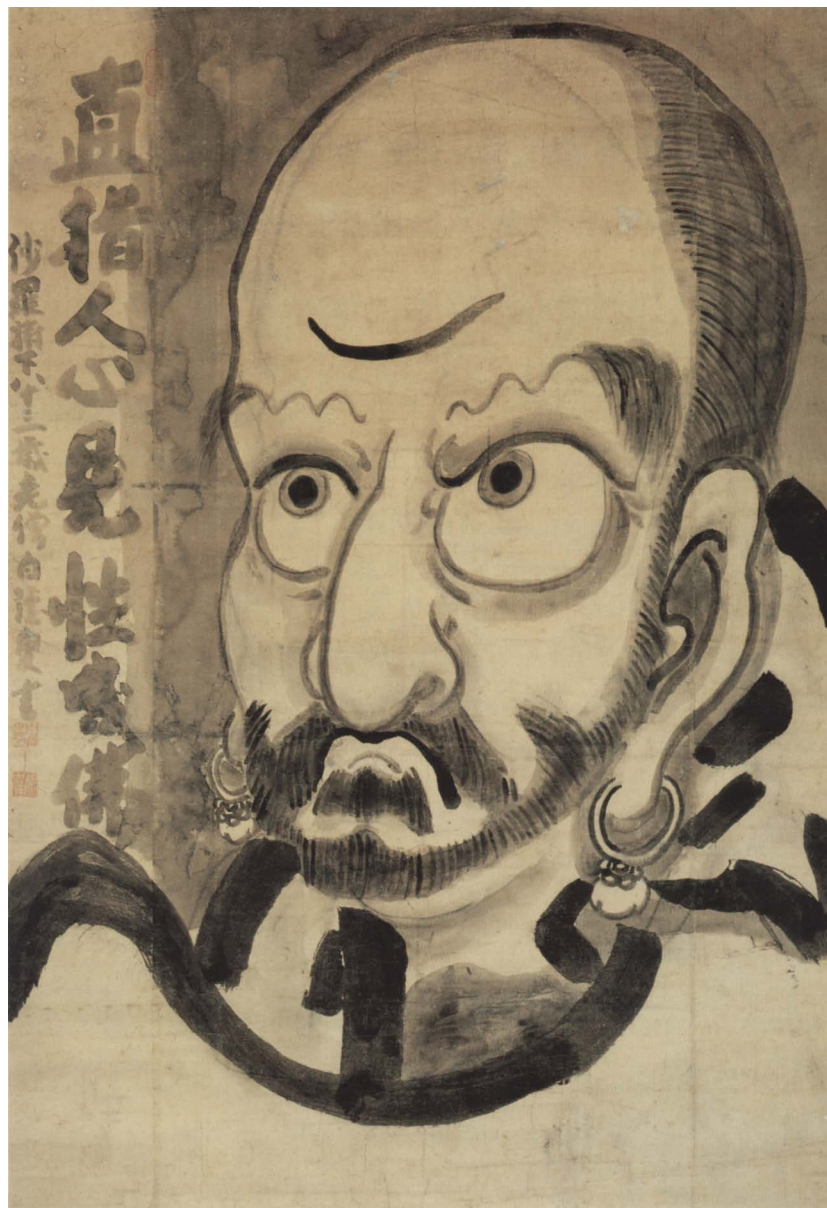
134.2 x 91.8 (52⁷/₈ x 36¹/₈)

Seikenji, Shizuoka

• The most commonly painted subject in Zenga, or “Zen pictures,” is Daruma, the first patriarch of Chinese Chan Buddhism (Japanese: Zen). Whether Daruma actually existed is a matter of some controversy; he is said to have been an Indian sage who transmitted the unwritten methods of a meditation-based teaching lineage to China in the seventh century. Of the many stories concerning Daruma, the best known is of his nine years of intense meditation at the Shaolin Temple in China. Portraits of Daruma exist from the eleventh century; as here, they typically portray his fierce determination by means of a truculent expression and unyielding gaze.

In this example the Zen master and painter Hakuin Ekaku emphasizes Daruma’s Indian origins by depicting him with a bearded face, prominent nose, and earrings. Although the portrait contains some quickly brushed elements, such as the ear and squiggly eyebrows, the drawing of the facial hair and the inked-in background reveal this as a carefully thought out portrait based on a long tradition of formal depictions of this most important of Zen masters.

The inscription reads “Pointing directly to the mind: see your own nature and become Buddha!” Hakuin wrote this colophon, from a longer verse attributed to Daruma, on many of his portraits of the patriarch. The two lines preceding the phrase on this painting are “A transmission outside the scriptures, without words or letters.” It is a fundamental teaching of



Zen that by rigorous meditation one discovers one’s true nature as a Buddha; that is, that every sentient being has Buddha-nature. The lines also refer to the unwritten doctrine of Zen as a practice transmitted from one mind to the other through the ages, outside the strictures of the written word. The compound *kenshō*, translated here as “see your own nature,” is a favored synonym for *satori* or “enlightenment.” RTS

125
Sengai Gibon (1751–1837)
Frog in Zen Meditation

Hanging scroll; ink on paper
40.3 x 53.8 (15⁷/₈ x 21¹/₈)
Idemitsu Museum of Arts, Tokyo

Illustrated page 216

• At first glance simply a delightful image of a smiling frog, the painting is given deeper levels of meaning by the inscription, which reads “If by sitting in Zen meditation a human becomes a Buddha.” This incomplete thought implies a further phrase: “then I, who always sit this way, should have become one long ago.” In Japan the natural sitting posture of a frog is thought to resemble that of a Zen monk’s seated meditation position. One implication here is that the mere act of sitting will lead to an enlightenment experience. But the Rinzai-school Zen master continually exhorts his students to exert maximum effort and emphasizes that Zen meditation is anything but passive waiting. Indeed it is hard to imagine a more active mode of meditation than Rinzai Zen, particularly when the student is near a breakthrough. At the same time, the student is warned against becoming attached to the idea of sitting; in Zen training one is discouraged from attachment to any set course or concept. Zen practice, or total mindfulness, is not restricted to seated meditation.

The frog looks out with a blissful expression; he is depicted with the utmost economy of line. The stroke of calligraphy descends and then swings to the right, forming a suggested ground plane for the frog. Sengai’s signature at the right perfectly balances a seemingly effortless composition that perhaps was carefully conceived, whether consciously or not. The calligraphy is without pretense and written to be easily read by the layperson to whom this masterpiece was probably given. RTS

126
Sengai Gibon (1751–1837)
Circle, Triangle, Square

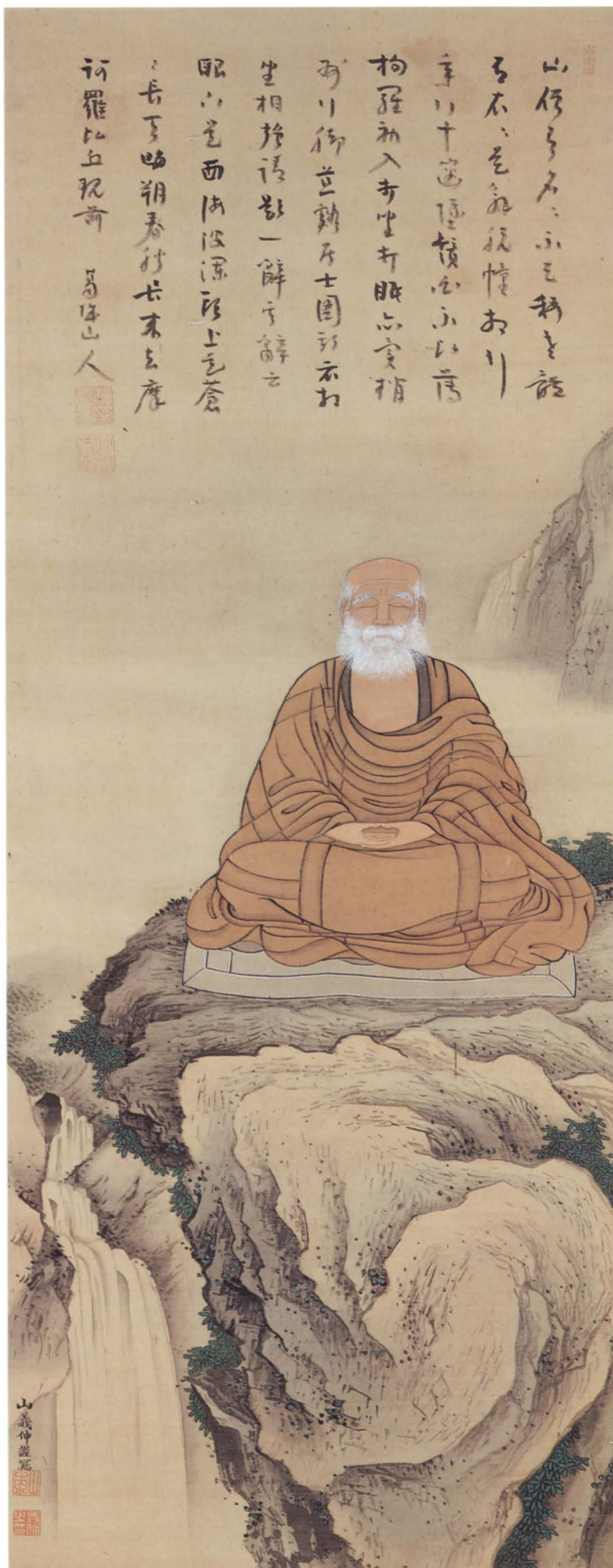
Hanging scroll; ink on paper
28.4 x 48.1 (11¹/₈ x 18⁷/₈)
Idemitsu Museum of Arts, Tokyo

Illustrated page 216

• Perhaps the best known of all Zenga, this elegant work is suggestive of a great variety of meanings. Reading from right to left (as required by Sengai’s signature at the left), a circle, a triangle, and a square are the only elements of the composition. A simple circle executed in one continuous stroke, called an *ensō*, is a frequent subject in Zen painting. The circle may represent the infinite or ultimate reality, the formless form: the entire universe is contained within it. The triangle may suggest the beginning of all forms, out of which comes the square, which is the triangle doubled. The possibilities are endless, lending this work a universality that has made it a Zen icon (in itself a contradiction). In any event, the progressively softer ink tone and the subtle overlapping of forms suggest a conceptual underpinning that is far from accidental.

A possible inspiration for these geometric forms may be found in stupas made of five parts, which include a cube, a globe, and a pyramidal finial that appears triangular in profile. These forms represent the five elements that are the basis of all material things, the human organism, and ultimately the entire universe (the body of the cosmic Buddha).

The inscription above Sengai’s seal reads “Fuyō saisho Zenkutsu” (The first Zen cavern [temple] in Japan). Sengai was the 123rd abbot of Shōfukuji in Hakata, northern Kyushu, Japan’s oldest Rinzai Zen temple, founded by Myōan Eisai in 1911. RTS



127

127

Yamamoto Yoshinobu

(active late eighteenth century)

Portrait of Jiun Onkō

Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk

184.8 x 53.7 (72³/₄ x 21¹/₈)

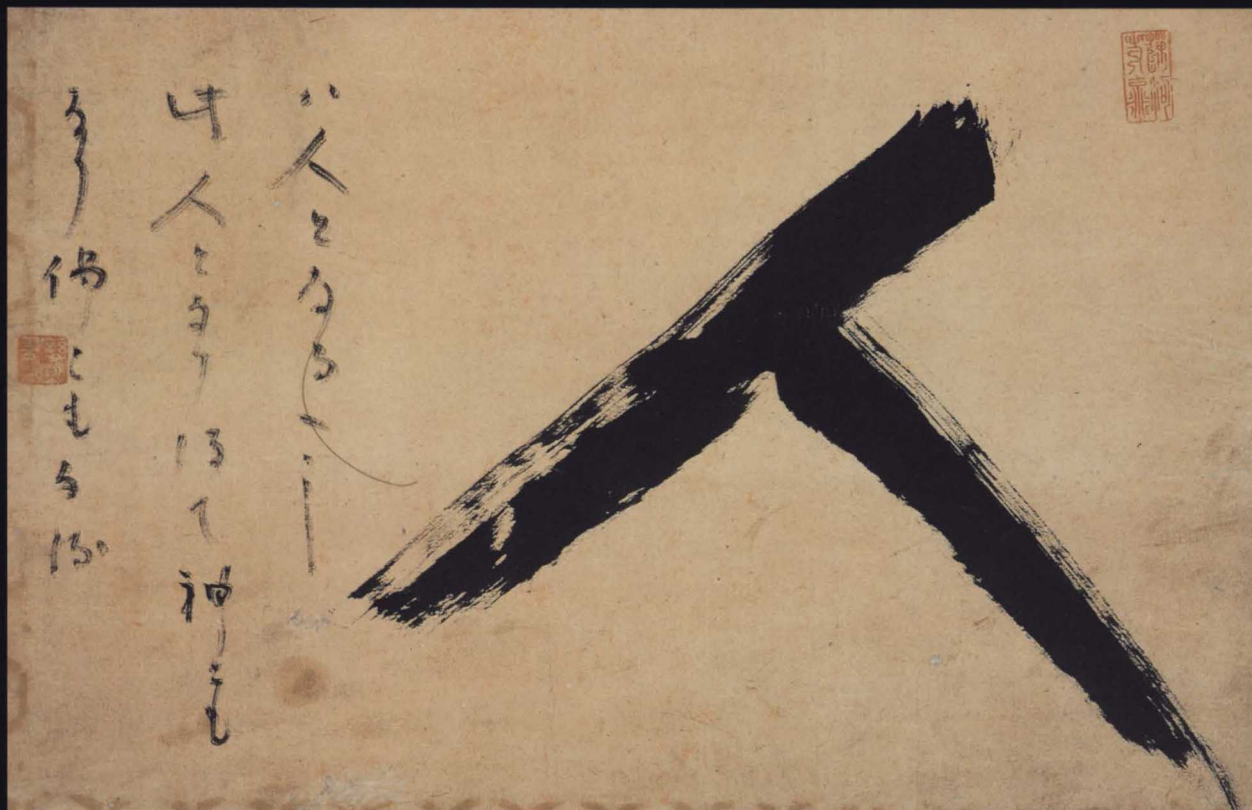
Kurokawa Ancient Writings Research Organization, Hyōgo

• Jiun Onkō (1718–1804), also known as Jiun Sonja, was an eminent monk who had studied Confucianism and a variety of forms of Buddhism before founding his own school of Buddhism, which was a mixture of Zen, Shingon, and an earlier Japanese form called Ritsu. This realistic yet moving portrait of Jiun is by Yamamoto Yoshinobu, probably one of Jiun's disciples. There are more than fifty extant portraits of Jiun in various poses, some nearly identical to this one, in which Jiun is meditating outdoors near his mountain retreat. He is shown at an advanced age, powerful and serene in the classic position for seated meditation. Portraits of a master were often given to students and lay believers as evidence of a bond between master and follower.

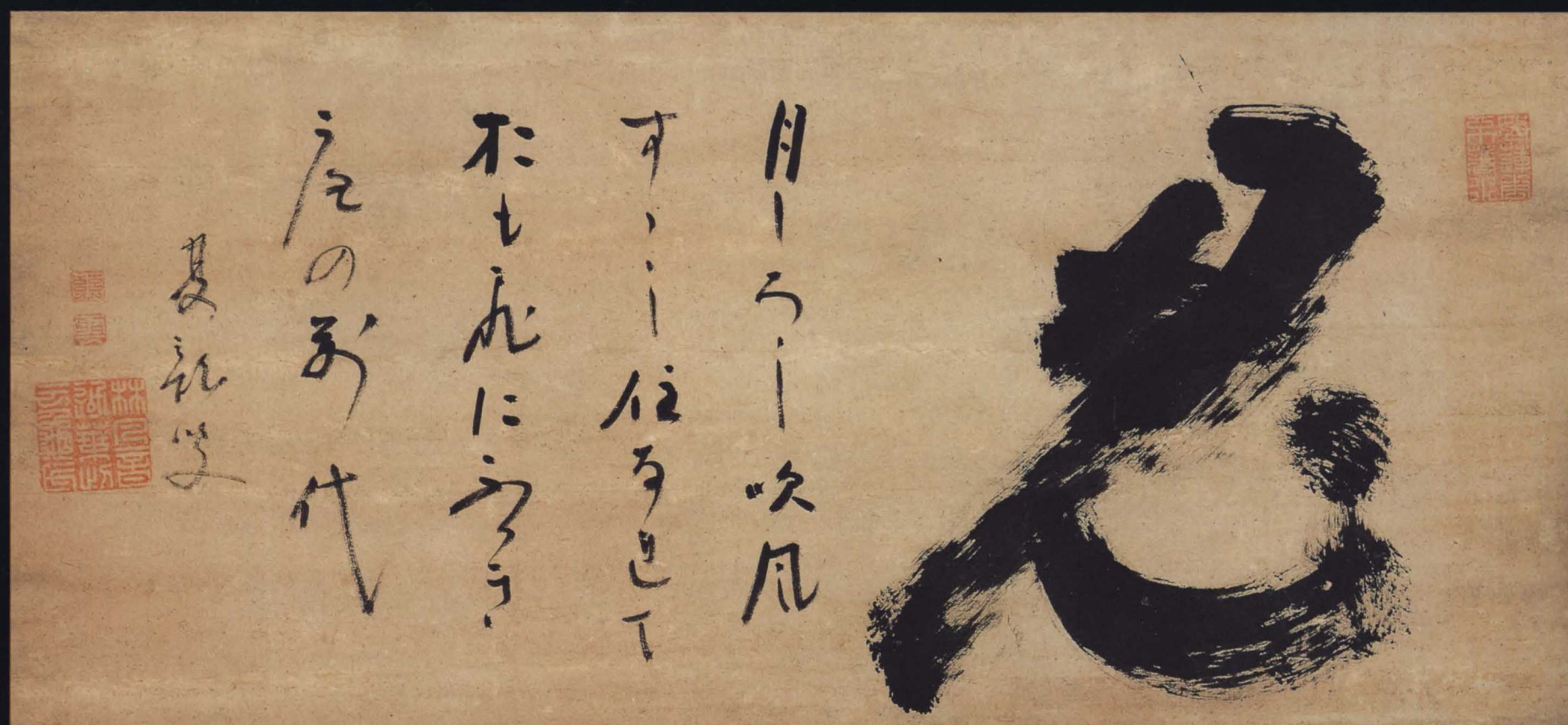
Jiun developed a style of calligraphy that is immediately recognizable for its bold expressionistic manner (see cats. 128, 129). Following a practice with a long history in Zen circles, he often inscribed his own portraits. The inscription here says that Jiun was asked to provide this colophon by the painter. In a self-deprecatory preface he notes that though he had achieved a certain renown and had passed the age of eighty his accomplishments did not compare with those of Buddha's disciples or the Chinese Zen master Chao-chou (d. 897). He then closes with a poem, "Beneath my eyes, the turbulent waves of the four seas. Above my head, the far reaches of the deep blue skies. Months and seasons have come and gone without cease, before this old and unenlightened monk." RTS

237

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128



129

128

Jiun Onkō (1718 – 1804)
Aphorism beginning with the character for “person”

Hanging scroll; ink on paper
34.9 x 54.7 (13³/₄ x 21¹/₂)
Private Collection, Hyōgo

• The large character that dominates this calligraphic work means “person” (*hito*). In its form, suggesting a walking figure, it is close to the original pictograph. Jiun used a large stiff brush, creating uneven streaks on the upper edge of each of the two strokes. The work abounds with energy, making it instantly recognizable as Jiun’s. The power of the large character is only strengthened by the relatively subdued and austere style of the rest of the verse: “Each of us must become a true person / once we have become this person / we become *kami*, we become Buddha.” RTS

129

Jiun Onkō (1718 – 1804)
Poem titled “Perseverance”

Hanging scroll; ink on paper
61.9 x 105.5 (24³/₈ x 41¹/₂)
Private Collection, Hyōgo

• Compositionally similar to the above calligraphy by the same artist, this work displays greater balance between the large character *nin* (perseverance) and the rest of the poem: “The moon is bright, the wind is blowing — / once you settle in, eternity in this hut / is filled with sorrows.”

In his scholarly pursuits Jiun devoted a great deal of time to the history of Sanskrit studies in China and Japan. In the powerful centripetal force of the *nin* one can discern a relationship to the written forms of Sanskrit. RTS

130

Enkū (1628 – 1695)
Two Kongōshin figures

Cedar
Height 220 (86⁵/₈)
Iisanji, Gifu

Illustrated page 218

• A monk first and then an artist, Enkū was a mountain-dwelling priest (*yamabushi*) of the Shūgendo school. Known for his devotion to a severe form of Buddhist asceticism, he traveled extensively, leaving behind thousands of sculptures. Enkū’s method of working rapidly with simple tools was well suited to his vow to carve 120,000 Buddhist images during his lifetime. In his use of a single block of wood he harked back to the earliest stage of Japanese Buddhist wood sculpture.

Each of these two giant images of Kongōshin was carved from a single block of Japanese cedar in Enkū’s distinctive style. The powerfully carved heads are marked with radiating notches that intensify the expressions on the faces. The relatively detailed heads surmount severely abstracted bodies: there is only the barest suggestion of the figures’ grasping a tabletlike object in their hands, held at chest height. The finlike projections running down both sides of the garment on each figure are remarkably reminiscent of bronze images of the Asuka-Hakuhō period (mid-sixth century to 710), suggesting that Enkū may have been knowledgeable about ancient Buddhist sculpture. Although unsigned, these massive seven-foot images possess a totemic power that unmistakably associates them with Enkū. RTS

131

Enkū (1628 – 1695)
Fudō Myōō and Attendants

Cypress
Height of Fudō 88.5 (34³/₄)
Kiyotakiji, Tochigi

• In this triad made from Japanese cypress, Fudō is flanked by his two principal attendants, Seitaka and Kongara. Fudō (literally “the Immovable”) belongs to a group of wrathful deities known in Japanese as *myōō* (bright kings; Sanskrit: *vidyārāja*), who persuade the reluctant along the Buddhist path to salvation. With sword in hand to cut through delusion, Fudō is rocklike in his resolve, literally standing on an outcropping. Enkū left part of the original wood roughly cut to represent the flames surrounding Fūdo. Simple, seemingly haphazard cuts in the wood’s surface effectively evoke the rhythmical folds of his garment. Standing at either side of the powerful Fudō are two child acolytes (*dōji*) capable of working miracles. Kongara, often depicted with hands clasped in a gesture of prayer, is here shown unconventionally with an upraised hand. Seitaka is usually shown holding a staff in his right hand that is rendered here as an abstracted notched vertical and functions as a support. The bodies of both are rough blocks with only parallel vertical slashes to suggest articulated forms. RTS





132

132
Mokujiki Gyōdō (1718–1810)
Yakushi Triad

Dated 1780

Wood

Height of Yakushi 35.5 (14)
Tochikubo Yaskushidō, Tochigi

- Mokujiki is usually part of the name given to monks who practice an extreme ascetic form of Japanese Buddhism. This can lead to confusions in identity among monks, who often have other names as well. Mokuji

monks were itinerant and stayed away from the large monastic centers. A number of them were sculptors (see also cat. 133), the best known of whom is Mokujiki Gyōdō.

Mokujiki Gyōdō (also “Gogyō” and “Myōman”) was a monk of the Shingon sect who took priestly vows in 1739 and mokujiki vows in 1762. At the age of fifty-six (in 1773) he took a further vow to travel around Japan, and it is thought that he began to carve images only after the age of sixty. From then until his death at ninety-three he created more than a thousand sculptures.

Gyōdō’s sculptures are composed of rounded lines and forms that impart a warmth and fullness to his figures. In this work the face of the central figure of Yakushi (Buddha of healing) has a benevolent, compassionate expression, characteristic of Gyōdō’s work. These figures constitute the main devotional image in a Yakushi Hall, where they are enshrined, flanked by Nikkō and Gakkō, the bodhisattvas of the sun and moon, respectively. Yakushi holds a medicine jar symbolizing his healing powers. RTS

133



133
Mokujiki Byakudō (1750 – 1825)
Ebisu and Daikokuten

Wood
Height 27.5 (10 7/8)
Ganshōji, Yamanashi

• Ebisu and Daikokuten are two of the seven gods of good fortune (*Shichi-fukujin*), a pantheon of folk gods that found particular favor in the Edo period. Daikokuten began as a Hindu deity (*Mahakala*) in India that fought against the forces of evil, evolved into a Buddhist guardian of the Three Treasures in both China and Japan, and finally became a Buddhist/Shinto deity who grants prosperity in Japan. The origin of Ebisu is unclear, but his name means foreigner, indicating a continental derivation. The two gods

are often shown together, as here, and enshrined in the kitchen or hearth of a Japanese home as tutelary deities. Daikokuten, on the right, grips a wooden mallet and a sack of treasures; Ebisu holds a stylized sea bream in his left hand.

Mokujiki Byakudō was a disciple of Mokujiki Gyōdō (see cat. 132), whom he met at age twenty-four and with whom he traveled throughout Hokkaido and Tōhoku (the northern part of Honshu) until he was thirty-two. Unlike his teacher, however, he settled for the next forty-three years in his hometown of Shiroyama, where most of his extant work is still located. In style he clearly followed his teacher, but in his repertory of subjects he was much less wide-ranging than either Gyōdō or Enkū, focusing on folk deities such as Koyasu Jizō or Koyasu Kannon (*koyasu* referring to easy childbirth) or the seven gods of good fortune. RTS

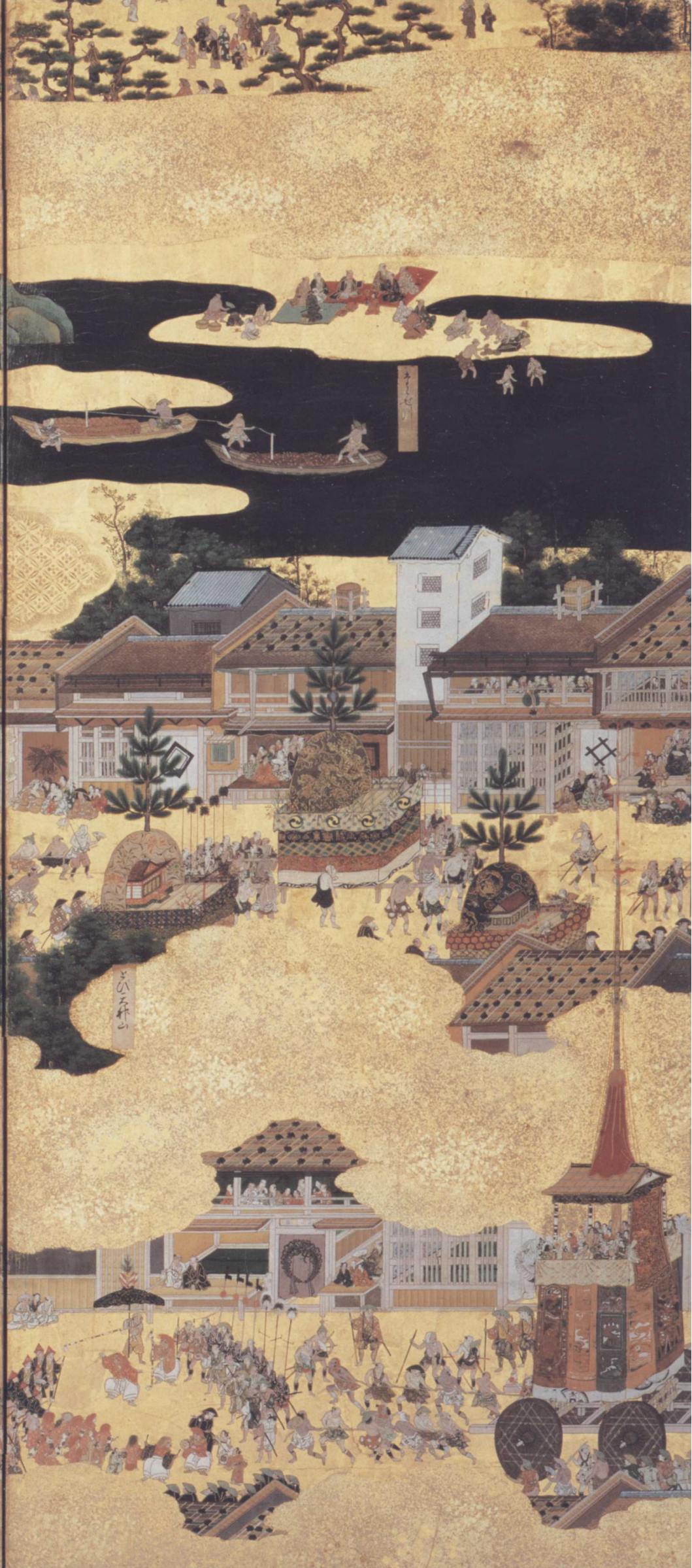
134

Gion Festival

Seventeenth century
Pair of six-panel screens; ink, color,
and gold on paper
Each 152.5 x 356.5 (60 x 140 3/8)
Kyoto National Museum

• The Gion Festival is said to have originated in the ninth century when a plague devastated the city of Kyoto. This summer festival has been held ever since as a protection against such plagues, which tended to occur in the humid heat of summer. The distinguishing feature of the Gion Festival is a type of large-wheeled float, the name of which is literally translated “mountain halberd” (*yama-boko*). The halberd is represented by the long vertical shaft above the float.

Each float is built, moved, and preserved by the men of sharply defined districts in central Kyoto. The festival thrived until the Ōnin War (1467 – 1477), which laid ruin to large parts of the city. The revival of the festival in the early sixteenth century became a symbol of the renewal of Kyoto itself. Previously, the festival’s patrons had been the military class; the new patrons were the ascendant *machishū*, urbanites who became the merchant class of the Edo period. A spirit of rivalry drove each district to lavish increasingly large sums on the decoration of its float. By the Momoyama period (1573 – 1615) these displays were festooned with rare textiles from Europe and bore paintings on their ceilings by the eminent artists of the day. The prominence of the festival is indicated by the floats’ appearance in almost every screen of the subject *Scenes In and Around Kyoto* (*rakuchū-rakugaizu*). RTS







135

Attributed to Yokoyama Kazan

(1784–1837)

Gion Festival

Two handscrolls; ink and color on silk

Each 31.7 x 1487 (12 1/2 x 585 3/8)

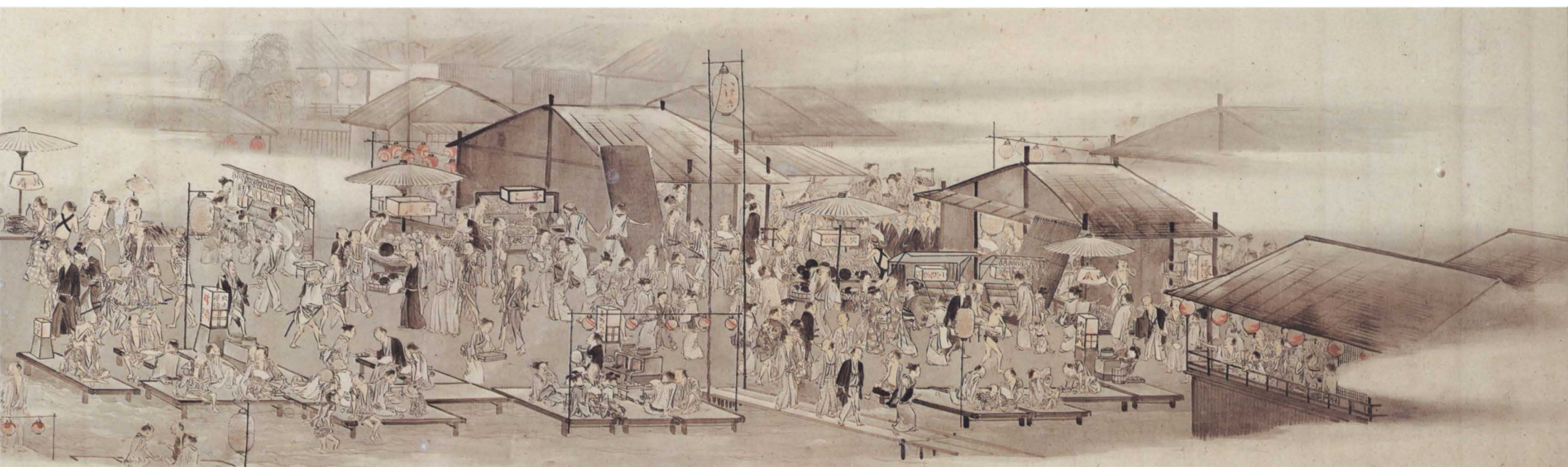
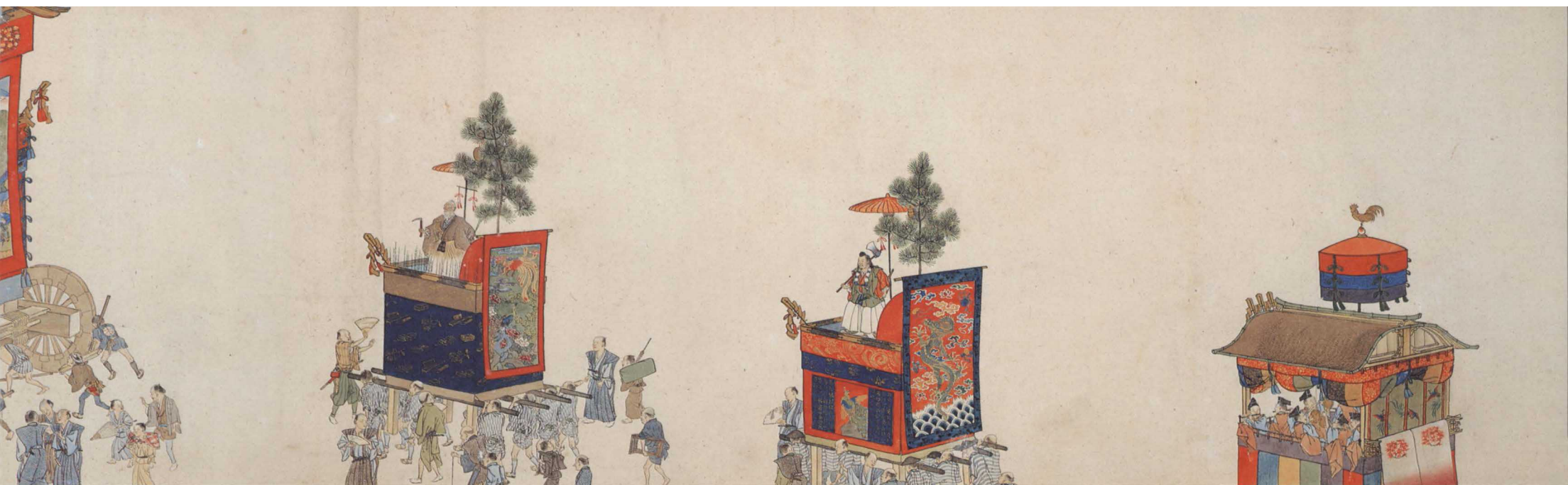
Private Collection, Tokyo

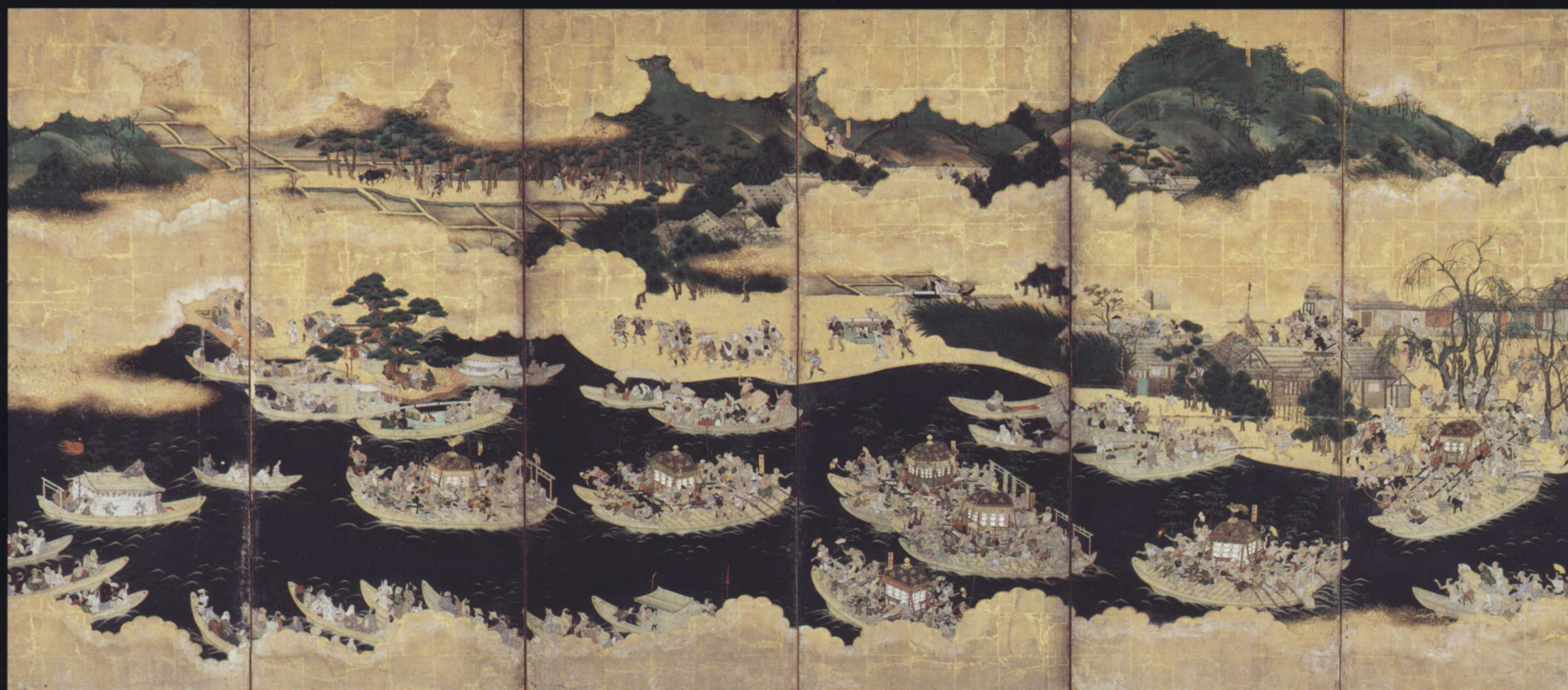
• In this late Edo representation of the celebrated Gion Festival the viewer travels through the streets of Kyoto experiencing the festival floats, the related temples and shrines, and the riverside pleasure areas (depicted in ink to suggest night). Emphasis is on distinctive features of the festival, such as the procession of men in bizarre costumes. Clouds and mist conceal a substantial part of the scene, reminding the viewer that the festival comes at the end of the rainy season. The floats are all precisely rendered so that each may be distinguished one from the other; many are wrapped in the elaborate brocades and tapestries produced in the Nishijin district in northwest Kyoto. These expensive brocades proudly display the wealth of the circle of patrons who support each float.

Handscrolls such as these would not be displayed in one's house but would be offered to a visitor to unroll slowly and reroll, evoking the memory of the festival and the midsummer season in which it takes place. Their portability also made them appropriate to carry home to one's village far from Kyoto, there occasionally to reminisce over one's visit to the legendary Gion Festival.

Yokoyama Kazan was a member of the Shijō school of Kyoto. Although these two handscrolls are unsigned, they are attributed to Kazan on the basis of style. RTS







Hie Sanno Festival

Seventeenth century
Pair of six-panel screens; ink, color,
and gold on paper
Each 154.5 x 354.5 (60⁷/₈ x 139¹/₂)
Konchi'in, Kyoto

• Hie Shrine is located in the village of Sakamoto on Lake Biwa, near Kyoto. In premodern Japan the shrine's festival was held in the fourth lunar month about the time of the Day of the Monkey, the monkey being the tutelary messenger of the shrine. Hie Shrine has always been closely associated with the nearby Tendai Buddhist temple of Enryakuji.

The upper middle part of the right screen depicts the shrine complex. In the center a sacred sakaki branch is enshrined inside a wall-less structure. The presence in the scene of praying Buddhist monks (shaved and in dark robes) as well as Shinto priests (in white robes and wearing black eboshi hats) graphically illustrates the syncretic nature of religious practice and belief in the Edo period. A procession of large portable shrines streams down the hill toward Lake Biwa. These shrines are immensely heavy and require many men to support them. The prominent and large red gate (*torii*) at the bottom of the screen marks the boundary of the shrine's property.

In the left screen each of the seven portable shrines is shown being carried by a pair of boats lashed together. They are engaged in a race that was held on Lake Biwa, the winner of which was presented with prizes and accorded great honor. At the far left of the screen three men in monkey costumes and monkey masks enjoy the race, reminding the viewer of the importance of the monkey to this shrine. RTS

Sumiyoshi Festival

Seventeenth century
Pair of six-panel screens; ink, color,
and gold on paper
Each 97.5 x 269 (38³/₈ x 105⁷/₈)
The Sakai Museum, Osaka

• Sumiyoshi Shrine is dedicated to the deified form of the legendary Empress Jingū and the three deities said to defend her. The four protect ships and sailors. The patron of poets is also enshrined there. The Sumiyoshi Festival was formerly held the last day of the sixth month and the first day of the seventh month of the premodern lunar calendar.

In this pair of screens the precincts of the shrine are detailed with great precision. The highlight is the procession of the four portable shrines of the four deities in the left portion of the left screen. The identity of the shrine is immediately apparent from the distinctive, steeply arched bridge over which the portable shrines are carried. The procession winds its way through the streets, passing shops whose identifying curtains (*noren*) indicate the activities within. The destination of the procession, as in most Shinto festivals, is the landing place of the deity. The point of view is from the water, as if from a passing boat. Many of the processionaires are in costume. In the second panel from the right in the right screen men are dressed as Portuguese, a fashion taken from these European visitors to Japan in the first half of the seventeenth century. RTS







138

Tsushima Festival

Seventeenth century

Eight-panel screen; ink, color,
and gold on paper146 x 468.4 (57¹/₂ x 184³/₈)

Private Collection, Kyoto

• Almost all of the festival screens remaining from the Momoyama to early Edo periods depict festivals of the Kyoto-Osaka region, which is to be expected, given the prevalence of large-scale festivals and numerous painting workshops in the area. Beyond these metropolitan centers,

the greatest number of extant festival screens from this period depict the festival of Tsushima Shrine in the prosperous port city of Tsushima, west of Nagoya in central Japan. Tsushima Shrine enjoyed the support of the Oda and Toyotomi ruling families in the Momoyama period and then that of the Tokugawa shogun in the Edo period. In premodern times it ranked with the venerable Ise Shrine as a pilgrimage site.

The festival depicted on this screen (and on its missing mate) took place on the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the sixth month in the lunar calendar, although the festival rites occur for six weeks before and after the fes-

tival itself. Along with those of Atsuta and Ichinomiya, the Tsushima Festival is one of the Three Great Festivals of Owari (part of present-day Aichi Prefecture). It is a river festival whose purpose is to drive away pestilence and plague. Although the origins of the festival are lost in the mists of time, documents describing the festival date to the mid-sixteenth century.

This recently discovered painting is the left screen of what was originally a pair; the location of the right screen is unknown. From other examples we know that the right screen would depict an evening procession of five

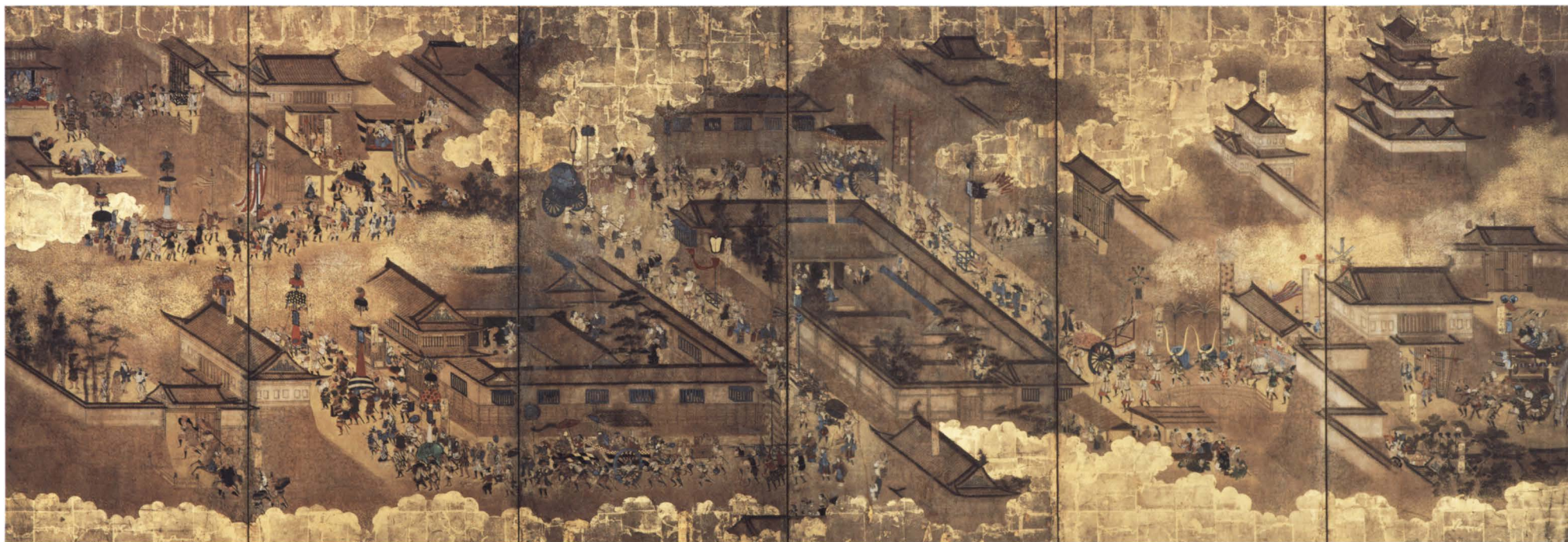


floats, each supported as seen here by two boats tied together. Each of these floats would be festooned with red candlelit lanterns clustered in a giant spherical form suspended from a mast. This screen of the morning festival shows slightly smaller floats that were configured during the night from the lantern floats of the previous evening. The floats feature life-size dolls that represent figures taken from *nô* plays. These five floats are joined by six towering floats, sixty-five feet in height, wrapped in brilliant brocades, surmounted by dragons and mechanical dolls. These dolls (*karakuri ningyô*) reached an

advanced stage of development in the Nagoya region, hence their appearance here. A careful viewing reveals that they are in the process of moving out of their small dwellings along the horizontal bar that supports them.

The eleven floats of the morning festival were the pride and joy of the six districts in premodern Tsushima, as they were symbols of the camaraderie and commercial activity of each district's group of supporters. The passage along the lower edge of the right three panels shows festivalgoers sampling the delicacies provided in well-furnished stalls. So precise is the detail that each of these foods can be identified, from noodles to sweets.

It is noteworthy that all surviving Tsushima Festival screens, with the exception of one pair of uncertain origin, are of eight panels instead of the far more common six-panel standard. The larger format was most likely chosen to accommodate the greater number of large floats and the geographical features that the patrons of these screens must have thought necessary to achieve an accurate picture of this spectacular festival. RTS



139

Scenes of a Festival in Edo

Seventeenth century

Pair of six-panel screens; ink, color, and gold on paper

Each 160 x 350 (63 x 137^{7/8})

Private Collection, Kyoto

• These recently discovered screens are here displayed publicly for the first time. They depict a festival, perhaps one associated with the Edo branch of the Hie Shrine (see cat. 136). The festival is meticulously described, with the focus on the portable shrines carried through the streets of the newly founded city of Edo. These screens are among the earliest, if not the earliest, known representations of Edo. They predate the pair in the National Museum of Japanese History, Chiba, which shows a much more expansive and developed city. In this pair the shogun's Edo Castle (top of far right panel, left screen) is not particularly large or impressive. Indeed the dominant complex is the massive one in the middle of the right screen, identified by an attached label as the

Tokyo residence of the branch of the ruling Tokugawa family from Kii. The compounds of the other two primary Tokugawa branch families, those from Owari and Mito, share the middle of the left screen. Given the dominance of the Kii residence in this pair of festival screens, perhaps it is not too farfetched to speculate that they were the result of a commission by that family.

Although these screens have yet to be thoroughly researched, they probably date to the middle of the seventeenth century and may have been produced by artists of the Kano or Sumiyoshi school. RTS







140

Ogata Kōrin (1658 – 1716)

Gods of Wind and Thunder

Pair of two-panel screens; ink,
color, and gold on paper

Each 166 x 183 (65 3/8 x 72)

Tokyo National Museum

Important Cultural Property

- Although separated by nearly half a century from the life and career of Tawaraya Sōtatsu (active c. 1600 – 1640), Kōrin found an inexhaustible source of inspiration in that enigmatic painter's work. After early training with a Kano-school painter, Kōrin devoted himself to perpetuating the style of Sōtatsu. He concentrated for a time on making copies of Sōtatsu's works, including his *Gods of Wind and Thunder* (Kenninji, Kyoto).

The demonlike Buddhist deities seen here are counterpoised on two screens. The green wind god, gripping his bag of wind, rushes from the right toward the white thunder god, who springs back as he hammers the drums on a ring that surrounds him. Their billowing scarves, flying hair, animated expressions, and active poses imbue the paintings with kinetic energy. Compared with Sōtatsu's original, Kōrin placed the figures slightly lower on the picture plane and completely within the frame, thus losing some of the explosive vim of the deities in Sōtatsu's painting. But he also shifted the pupils of the gods' eyes, giving them a sharper gaze.

Benevolent lesser deities in the Buddhist pantheon, the gods of wind and thunder first appeared in Japan in illustrated scriptures of the Nara period (710 – 794). Sōtatsu is thought to have based his paintings on either temple sculptures or narrative handscroll paintings from the Kamakura period. Versions of Sōtatsu's *Gods of Wind and Thunder* became a trademark of later Rinpa artists. MM



Landscape

**City, Country,
Travel, and
Vision in
Edo Cultural
Landscapes**

MELINDA TAKEUCHI

creation. It was here long, long before we were ever dreamed. It was here without us. It watched us arrive. How strange we must have seemed.”¹ Throughout history cultures have internalized countless ways of coming to terms with their environment. The landscapes in this book unfold to us the rich, emotional worlds created by the Japanese in response to their surroundings. Because these worlds seem so “natural,” it is easy to overlook that what we see in these pages is not nature, however, but culture: it is representation of representation.

The Japanese paradigms for landscape resist linear narratives. By the Edo period landscape as a discursive field had evolved for more than a millennium. Elements of Chinese thought mingled with Japanese; conflicting claims to the land, like argument over the relative superiority of native gods versus imported Buddhas, were thrashed out in the theaters of politics, religion, and art. Let us begin by excavating some of the layers of meaning that accrued to landscape through Japanese history. As will be clear, many objects in the book fit more than one of these conceptual situations.

Ritual appropriation by viewing (kunimi): To view the landscape implied taking possession of it, a ceremonial practice dating from protohistoric times. Even as late as 1582 the warlord Akechi Mitsuhide ascended sacred Mount Atago outside Kyoto, directed his gaze across the prospect, and composed ritual poetry the day before he assassinated

Oda Nobunaga in hopes of displacing the hegemon and appropriating the land.² The mountains of Yoshino (cat. 161) were a potent site for such rituals of symbolic possession. The “innocent” rite of cherry viewing there by Toyotomi Hideyoshi slots into a long lineage of political gestures that make use of acquisition by visual means.

Mandalization: The two great Buddhist mandala, the Adamantine and Womb Worlds, were conceptually superimposed over the physical landscape. Among the earliest sites to be mandalized were Kumano (as the Womb, or female, mandala; cat. 185) and Yoshino (the Adamantine, or male, mandala; cat. 161).³ These mandalized areas were domains conducive to transfiguration, salvation, and temporal power.⁴

Heaven or hell: Sacred mountains came to be seen as physical corridors to other worlds, a notion that originated in Chinese Daoism. Mount Fuji, for example, was considered the Paradise of Miroku (Sanskrit: Maitreya), Buddha of the Future; and Tateyama was thought to be the locus of the blood-pool hell for women.⁵ Certain sites were also viewed as haunts of nature spirits, or *kami*. Kami not properly propitiated could wreak harm, even death, to transgressors. In a related sense such sites could confer immortality. Mount Fuji in particular, because its name was homophonous with the characters meaning “no death,” was associated with longevity. This concept is especially evident in the rendition of Fuji by Nagasawa Rosetsu (cat. 158) — the cranes being another symbol of longevity — and made explicit in the multiple images of Fuji by Katsushika Hokusai (cats. 169, 171 – 176).⁶

Conflation with poetic views: The tradition of associating poetry with landscape began with Chinese poems on the Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers. Transferred to Japan, it was superimposed over Japanese scenery, like the Eight Views of Ōmi (cat. 143). Allusions to even a few of the Eight Views were sufficient to structure meaning, as in Ike Taiga’s *Wondrous Scenery of Mutsu* (cat. 164), where motifs from the original Chinese Eight Views were worked into a topographical scene.

Resonances of national identity: Although not landscape in the imagistic sense, the maps on two porcelain dishes (cats. 141, 142) authoritatively place Japan at the center of the world, a world that, it might be added, counts the Land of the Dwarves and the Land of Women among the countries on the periphery as “Other.” Even though by the nineteenth century, when these maps were created, Japanese surveyors had more accurately determined the shape of the country, these symbols of Japanese national cohesiveness remained extremely popular. Fuji, too, became an important symbol of national identity.

Simulacra or replicated sites: The practice of absorbing the mana of famous places by replicating them began rather early in Japan. In the ninth century the emperor’s son-in-law constructed in his garden a replica of Shiogama in the “Deep North”;⁷ reproductions of famous views also may be found in the garden of the seventeenth-century Katsura Detached Palace. The city of Edo relied on numerous such simulacra for authority. The site most replicated was Mount Fuji (eight of them in Edo alone), which was climbed in effigy on special days.⁸ This practice also had implications for painted replicas of places.

One of the difficulties in studying Edo-period attitudes toward landscape is the problem of establishing to what degree — and on what levels — ancient attitudes and practices lingered. How long did travelers, for example, continue to subscribe to the notion that local gods must be propitiated? One can say with certainty that Edo-period travelers were keenly aware of historical topography. The poet Matsuo Bashō (1644 – 1694) made a point of seeking out the site where Fujiwara Sanetaka, riding past a crossroad deity without bothering to dismount to pay obeisance, fell off his horse and died as a result

of his disrespect.⁹ This incident, occurring roughly seven hundred years before Bashō's visit, reveals the manner in which the Japanese landscape perpetuates the past through memory.

Landscape has been described as a "cultural process."¹⁰ The complexity of Japanese landscape depiction derives from the evolving combination, over a thousand years, of numerous strains — literary, religious, pictorial — that follow their own trajectories, interact, go dormant, and recombine in endlessly fertile Edo imagination.

CITYSCAPES

In addition to providing lively subject matter, the urban environment was essential in making possible art's social and economic underpinnings. Works of art are simultaneously aesthetic objects, social documents, and economic commodities. The florescence of the urban environment during the Edo period led to the production and appreciation of the objects discussed here.

In just one century — the years between the late 1500s and the late 1600s — Japan went from being a country with a single major city, Kyoto, to one of the most urbanized nations in the world.¹¹ This process was precipitated thanks to the policy, begun by Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536–1598) and vigorously pursued by the Tokugawa, of uprooting the warrior class from their land base in the country and relocating them in castle towns where they could be kept under centralized supervision. It is estimated that some fifteen percent of the population during the Edo period — including farmers and villagers — eventually gravitated toward the castle towns, turning them into real cities, despite repeated (and futile) prohibitions against leaving the land.

Cities are composite mental fictions as well as fabricated physical environments. The ancient capital of Kyoto offered a deeply internalized model of the ideal city. Thickly coded images of Kyoto had appeared in the sixteenth century in pairs of monumental screens called *Scenes In and Around Kyoto* (*rakuchū-rakugaizu*). The screens follow prescribed formulas: the compositions progress from left to right, beginning with spring in the northeast on the right screen and moving rightward into summer in the southeast. The seasonal-directional progression is picked up on the left screen (fig. 1), which starts at the left with autumn and curves rightward around the western suburbs, merging with winter in the northwest. Activities are calibrated by season and direction (New Year's ceremonies of early spring take place at the imperial palace in the northeastern quarter). The mandalalike images conflated cosmic order with an unblemished earthly order that expunged from the visual record the very palpable social chaos and widespread destruction that blighted sixteenth-century Kyoto.

These Kyoto cityscapes consist of accretions of famous places (*meishoe*) interspersed with scenes from everyday life. The imperial palace, mansions of leading pedigreed families, and ancient temples like Kiyomizudera (founded in the ninth century) stood cheek by jowl with the shops of fishmongers and bow sellers. Some of the famous places had apotropaic functions: Mount Hiei in the northeast, and its great temple, Enryakuji, presided over the unlucky "demon gate" direction. The protective deity of Mount Atago was supposed to guard the city from fire. This was the urban paradigm made visible.

The dilemma that faced Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542–1616) as he designed his new headquarters in Edo was identical to the predicament encountered by the Yongle emperor when the Ming-dynasty monarch decided to transfer the Chinese capital from Nanjing to Beijing in 1421: how to invest an upstart place that possessed little historical or cultural cachet with the rich symbolic character befitting the seat of a ruler. And the solution hit upon by both men was similar: along with the physical construction

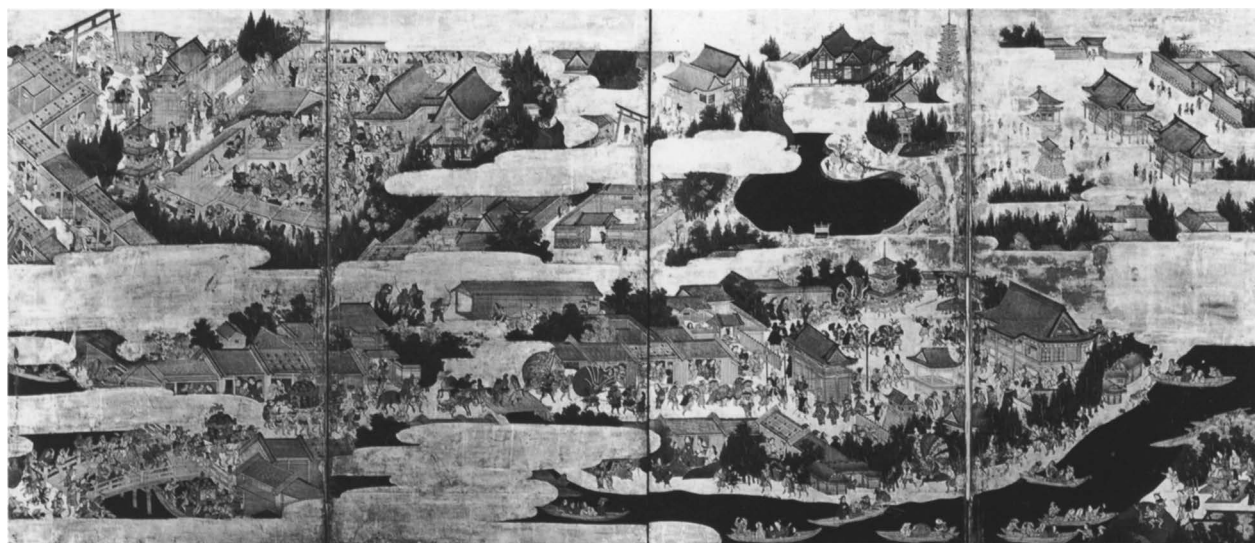


fig. 1
Muromachi period,
Scenes In and Around Kyoto,
detail from a pair
of six-panel screens;
ink, color, and gold on paper,
137.8 x 348.4 (52 1/2 x 137 1/8),
National Museum of Japanese
History, Chiba

of the setting came the epistemological construction of the place’s “meaning.” The Chinese emperor commissioned a scholar-painter to design the series *Eight Views of the Environs of Beijing*, thereby “imposing a pattern of cultural references on a region previously thinly supplied with them.”¹²

The founders of Edo, after draining the swamps and filling in the marshes, symbolically transferred many of Kyoto’s famous sites to the new center of power. Mount Hiei (Hieizan) was given an eastern counterpart, “Eastern Mount [Hi]ei” (Tōeizan), in the Ueno district. The location was further invested with a sense of antiquity by the construction of the temple Kan’ei-ji, dedicated during the Kan’ei era (1624 – 1644), thus linking it with Mount Hiei’s Enryakuji, created during the Enryaku era (782 – 806). Edo’s very own Mount Atago Shrine protected the Eastern Capital from fire, and its new

fig. 2
Edo, early seventeenth
century, detail from a
pair of eight-panel screens,
121.5 x 502.6 (47³/₄ x 198),
Idemitsu Museum of Arts, Tokyo



Kiyomizudera vied for splendor with the gantries of Kyoto's original Kiyomizudera. The tutelary shrine dedicated to the goddess Benten in Lake Biwa north of Kyoto (cats. 143, 189) was replicated in the middle of an artificial pond, Shinobazu (Edo's Lake Biwa), in the Ueno district (see cat. 188). Edo was literally an artificially built environment, down to the man-made land reclaimed from the sea.

The new city had been occupied only a few decades before screens depicting its new famous places began appearing in emulation of those of Kyoto (fig. 2). The right screen of a pair painted in the first half of the seventeenth century shows Shinobazu Pond and the Benten Shrine, Eastern Mount Hiei, Kan'eiji, and the outworks of Edo Castle. These became part of the standard official imagery for the city.

Art has a willful way of exposing rents in the social fabric, and the images of Kyoto as a utopian ideal underwent transformations that underscore the changing conception of city life brought on by the economic, demographic, and artistic complexification from the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries.¹³ By the early seventeenth century the same city is invested with a more raucous character. *Amusements along the Riverside at Shijō* (cat. 231) focuses exclusively on the licentious or entertainment aspects of this dignified ancient capital. Such images of Kyoto's famous pleasure district were echoed in depictions of the burgeoning theater and brothel districts of Edo (see cats. 238, 239, 241, 280, 281). The difference lies in the vision of the artist, now no longer a member of the aristocratic elite, but a freelancing "town painter" (*machi eshi*) whose view from below, so to speak, was added to the composite visual urban discourse.

Images of Edo quickly followed suit. A factor responsible for the representation of the city as a playground lay in the rapid rise, during the eighteenth century, of its printing industry, the chief purveyors of images of the so-called floating world. Woodblock prints were the "Edo souvenir" par excellence, bought by tourists and residents alike. In Shikitei Sanba's book *Floating World Bathhouse* (*Ukiyoburo*) (1809–1822) children declare matter-of-factly, "We always take Toyokuni prints as presents when we go to Kansai" (the Kyoto area).¹⁴ The officials of Edo were at a disadvantage in controlling the depictions of their city that went out to the provinces.

Nonetheless, emphasis on the pleasure districts was displaced in the nineteenth century by a more symphonic, measured urban portrait, first distributed through printed guidebooks, then modified,



cat. 147
 Andō Hiroshige,
 Fireworks over Ryōgoku Bridge,
 from One Hundred Famous
 Views of Edo,
 1856, color woodblock print,
 34 x 22.5 (13 ³/₈ x 8 ⁷/₈),
 Brooklyn Museum of Art
 Collection

reverently and lyrically, in the massive series *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo* by Andō Hiroshige (cats. 145 – 154).¹⁵ It is not surprising that Hiroshige followed set tropes for depicting given famous places — such as fireworks at the Ryōgoku bridge (cat. 147) — because he had illustrated such guide-books himself. In *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo*, his last great production, he breathed new life into themes that had nearly been exhausted by repetition.

Not only did the city nurture its artists, provide them with subject matter, and furnish them clientele, it served as a foil for the countryside. The city supplied the structure of culture for the appreciation of nature. Nearly all of the painters represented in this book hailed from the great cities of Kyoto or Edo; some, like Ike Taiga (1723 – 1776), proudly included their native city in their signature. Rural areas served as a lure precisely because artists could return to the sociability and economic support of city life. The Confucian notion of superior people refreshing their soul in nature and broadening their spirit with travel was an image affected by warrior and commoner alike. The environment of the farm was celebrated in the Confucian rhetoric, which placed farmers second only to the scholar class. But picturesque scenes glorifying agriculture (cats. 91, 92) belong to the ideology of the city. No self-respecting Edo-period painter would have dreamed of trading places with the back-breaking lot of the farmer.

“PURE”
LANDSCAPE

At one end of the spectrum of landscapes are scenes so general that one cannot be certain whether the artist intended to portray Japan or China. *Frozen Clouds, Sifted Snow* by Uragami Gyokudō, *Spring Willows and Heron*; *Mynas in Autumn Foliage* by Goshun, and *Traveler and Horse Passing through a Spring Landscape* by Yosa Buson (cats. 156, 157, 170) belong to this category.

Gyokudō’s painting offers one model of how a “pure” landscape might be read. A towering Chinese-style “dragon vein” mountain under a lowering gray sky dominates the painting. Human presence is indicated only by a tiny figure in a hut dwarfed by the monumental mountains and formidable ravines. Cold gray ink and the snow white of the paper convey the shivery effect of winter. Gyokudō’s abstract brushwork encompasses every imaginable mode of delivering ink to paper: it is heavily flung or subtly daubed in scratchy or velvety strokes; in places (the trees at the top right) it even looks as if it were burned into the page, like a sparkler. Touches of orange — hints of lingering autumn — serve to make the atmosphere colder yet. Few images have so successfully captured the lonely harshness of a frozen landscape. The Chinese cognoscenti, or *bunjin* (Chinese: *wenren*), whom Gyokudō was imitating called such landscapes “mountains of the mind” or “heart prints.”

These pure landscapes, however, are subject to the same systems of encoding that govern all representation. They embody a longing for untrammelled and undiluted nature — part learned from China, part in emulation of a long history of celebrated Japanese recluses, and part stimulated by the tensions of living in a society governed by strict ideological protocols. The alienation visible in Gyokudō’s landscape reflects the social and personal alienation of the artist, who was not suited either to his times or to his station as a samurai retainer for an important domain in Bizen. He resigned his position and took up a life of cultivated wandering. Questions of subjectivity and self-fashioning are raised by Gyokudō’s self-transformation from bureaucrat to *bunjin*. To what degree does an individual have a say about “who” he or she might be? Gyokudō deliberately traded the label “samurai” for the designation “wandering literatus.” The landscape bears witness to this, serving as a “focus for the formation of identity.”¹⁶

Landscapes like these thus constitute a palimpsest of biographical and cultural layering. They represent a quasi-utopian vision where men and women endeavor to cut themselves free from social constraints. In that sense they serve as autobiographical portraits.

NOSTALGIC
LANDSCAPES

It is a commonplace to say that in Japan nothing is ever discarded. Even in an age like the Edo period, where the up-to-date could barely keep pace with itself, lingering nostalgia for the culture of the halcyon Heian period (794–1185) provided a means of inserting elegiac elegance into the everyday. The past spoke to something enduring in the present. As the poet Ki no Tsurayuki (c. 892–945) recognized in his preface to the first imperial poetry anthology, basic emotions lie at the heart of all human experience.

The political chaos of the sixteenth century sent court culture into the provinces, carried by noble refugees from Kyoto. The classical revival triggered by this exodus continued unabated throughout the Edo period.¹⁷ The beloved favorites *Tale of Genji* and *Tales of Ise*, and others such as *One Hundred Poems by One Hundred Poets* (see cats. 100–105), took hold of the popular imagination. Motifs from the classics appeared on clothing, items of personal decoration, ceramics, and lacquer (cat. 6). Pastimes from the classical era, such as the incense game and the shell game (cats. 246, 273), once the purview of court aristocrats and later of samurai imitators of court culture, entered middle-class life during the Edo period. What we might call nostalgic landscape was a part of this domain.

The *Tale of Genji* (late tenth/early eleventh century) is not noted for extensive landscape imagery. Places, although many are mentioned, serve as an emotional foil for human activity. Once set in motion, though, texts generate new texts. The narrative of Murasaki Shikibu's writing the *Tale of Genji* at Ishiyamadera became embedded in *Genji* lore, due in part to the efforts of that temple to claim this work as part of its official historical-religious chronicle. Just as Ishiyamadera was seen as a cradle for *Genji*, renditions of Ishiyamadera became a stock motif for the decoration of containers cradling volumes of the story (cats. 159, 160).

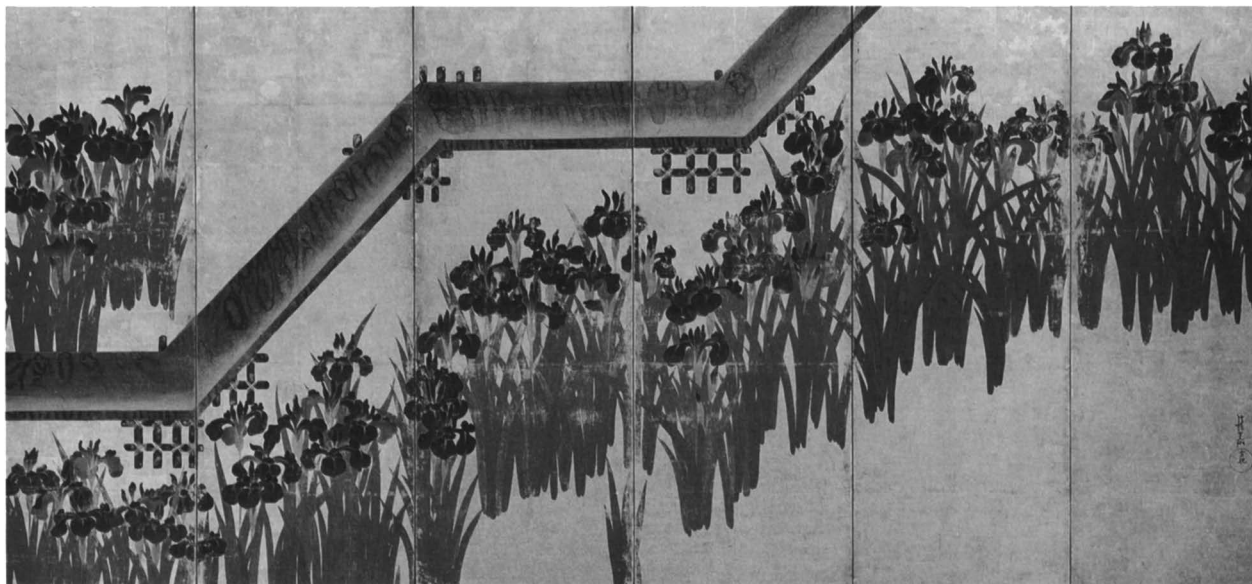
The other locus classicus of courtly nostalgia, the older *Tales of Ise*, is richer in landscape imagery, mainly because exile is a major theme. The hero, associated with the courtier Ariwara no Narihira, wanders through the provinces, leaving in his wake a trail of places newly canonized. Like the recitation of toponyms in a *nō* play, these sites have to do with mood, not topography. Interest in the physical properties of famous poetic places was limited to a few identifying motifs. Their combination was governed by set rules for “packing” the image, which was then “unpacked” by the viewer. By this means generic landscapes became specific ones. By the seventeenth century illustrations based on motifs from *Tales of Ise* enjoyed tremendous popularity (fig. 3).¹⁸

The scene from *Tales of Ise* pictured most often comes from the ninth chapter, as the hero and his companions reach a place called the eight-fold bridge (*yatsuhashi*). As they sit down to lunch, the beauty of the swamp-blooming iris moves them to compose a poem. In early seventeenth-century depictions of the eight-fold bridge, usually executed in the traditional Tosa style, the hero and his companions sit in a generic landscape whose traditional cloud-and-wave patterns have been garnished by the bridge and iris — tropes to identify the narrative. Codices of place names (*utamakura*) and their assigned meanings provided poets and painters with the specific motifs needed to suggest poetic toponyms.¹⁹ In cases where there was an accompanying text, it would have been written by a courtier or famous calligrapher, underscoring the rift in status between the painter and the loftier personages privileged as inscribers.



fig. 3
Eight-Fold Bridge, from
Tales of Ise (1629),
New York Public Library,
Spencer Collection, Astor,
Lenox, and Tilden Foundations,
vol. 1, episode 9

fig. 4
Ogata Kōrin,
The Eight-Fold Bridge,
right screen of a pair of
six-panel screens;
ink, color, and gold on paper,
70.5 x 146.3 (27 3/4 x 57 1/2),
Metropolitan Museum of Art,
New York



This ancient convention of suggesting classical places by means of scenic markers was pared down to its elegant minimum by painters of the Rinpa school during the seventeenth century. The eight-fold bridge episode furnished one of the most easily identifiable, hence most popular, points of entry into the courtly past, even for those with a shaky knowledge of it. Prostitutes could wear the iris motif on their robes with the assurance that the allusion would be recognized (see cat. 252).

The Ogata brothers, Kōrin and Kenzan, exploited the eight-fold bridge motif in lacquer, ceramic, and painting. Kōrin (1658–1716), a professional painter, established a paradigm for the theme with an economy of motif and a maximum of sumptuousness (fig. 4). He reduced the motifs to two: the monumental iris, painted simply but sensuously in two colors of expensive lapis lazuli with malachite green stems, and the bridge, wittily textured with his signature puddles of pigment. Kōrin also painted the motif on Kenzan's pottery.²⁰

The contrast between Kōrin's version and that of his brother Kenzan (1663–1743) reveals the flexibility of Rinpa landscape. Kenzan's biography shows a man whose temperament mirrors the Chinese recluse-literatus. While still young, Kenzan adopted the name Shinsei (Deep Meditation) and moved to a "retreat" in Omuro, outside Kyoto, which became the center of a salon of learned and lofty people. His interests embraced Chinese and Japanese culture alike — he was too multifaceted to be pinned down to either. Kenzan was thus no ordinary artisan. He was among the earliest Japanese potters to sign his pots, thereby making his own subjectivity an essential component of his product. His works have an individualist directness absent in Kōrin's polished screen.

Kenzan imparted an innovative twist to his "nostalgia-scape" of the eight-fold bridge (cat. 163). Although the blue pigment on the irises has been completely lost in places, the painting is colorful and richly textured in the "boneless" technique of painting without outlines. The work is more casually executed than others of this school, such as Watanabe Shikō's *Flowers and Trees of the Four Seasons* (cat. 162). Kenzan embedded the images in calligraphy (part of the prose introduction plus the poem) that is so densely written as almost to sink the image into the background, evoking but not replicating the traditional decorated papers of the classical age. Kenzan, moreover, is the sole performer in this rendition of the ancient "three perfections": painting, calligraphy, and poetry. Since professional artists



cat. 163
Ogata Kenzan,
The Eight-Fold Bridge,
hanging scroll; ink
and light color on paper,
35.6 x 40.6 (14 x 16)
Private Collection, Kyoto,
Important Cultural Property

customarily did not execute the calligraphy in their works, Kenzan’s act of inscribing the text, like his signature on his ceramics, speaks of emerging notions of the artist’s individuality. The calligraphy contains another layer of allusion: it quotes the arthritic hand of that embodiment of court culture, Fujiwara no Teika (1162 – 1241). Teika’s version of *Ise* was the authoritative text used in the Edo period.

LANDSCAPES
OF TRAVEL

In traditional cultures a journey of any length, no matter what its ostensible purpose, was more than perambulation from point A to point B. Leaving one’s familiar surroundings for the vast world of the unfamiliar was fraught with the unexpected. Early Japanese travelers ventured from order into disorder:

Rest or home basically mean order and security, whereas movement is potentially dangerous. A person moving from a state of rest into one of movement faces, especially during travel through unfamiliar space, the danger of a radical change in personality. Home is a cosmos artificially created when people created the order of time and the rhythms of agriculture, and, connected with these, a social and religious order.... Travel was something feared, an activity exposing the traveler to forces outside his control.²¹

Prior to the Edo period a few people voyaged for the many. It was as if, by venturing into the unknown, travelers offered themselves up as heroic saints. The journeys of the priest-poet Saigyō (1118 – 1190) exemplify the archetypal Japanese literary voyage of exploration. His travels to the northern

provinces inspired a long line of pilgrims, who, in the words of Lady Nijō (b. 1258), desired to “renounce this life and wander wherever my feet might lead me . . . and make out of this a record of my travels that might live on after my death.”²² Saigyō’s travels motivated a number of artists, including Taiga, Bashō, and Buson (see cats. 164, 167, 168).

From very early times elaborate precautionary practices grew up around travel, echoes of which reverberated down the centuries. Central to many of these was the belief in the magical power of words (*kotodama*).²³ Poems in particular were believed to embody special protective powers. For the traveler they functioned, mantralike, as prayers for a safe journey. Through poetry the traveler could win the blessings of the gods. This is why so many written odysseys — Narihira’s, Saigyō’s, and Bashō’s, to name a few — devote so much space to poetry: it was a way of propitiating the unknown, the dangerous, and the strange.

The institutional conditions making possible the rise of travel during the Edo period are well rehearsed in scholarly literature.²⁴ Roads, inns, restaurants, and the “mobility industry” of packhorse-men, porters, ferrymen, and river waders made travel less perilous and less unthinkable than it had been before the Edo period, while the proliferation of guidebooks, maps, and other kinds of travel literature certainly made it more rewarding. By the nineteenth century the infrastructure was fully in place to support mass movement.

Two popular models for travel imagery during the Edo period were the quasi-religious quest for enlightenment and the self-indulgent pursuit of pure fun. Bashō’s *haikai* journeys²⁵ recounted in *Narrow Road to the Deep North* exemplify the time-honored literary voyage of self-discovery; it was later illustrated by Yosa Buson (cat. 168). *Shank’s Mare* (*Hizakurige*) by Jippensha Ikku (1766–1831), a comic account of the trip down the Tōkaidō by a pair of roguish down-and-outs named Yaji and Kita, views travel through the irreverent lens of popular fiction. *Shank’s Mare* inspired Hiroshige’s series *Fifty-three Stations of the Tōkaidō* (cats. 179–184). Different in flavor as they are, both written works reveal many of the period’s indispensable travel tropes. They include in abundance that essential element, poetry. Bashō, Yaji, and Kita not only tote their requisite guidebooks but frequently consult them. All three end up at the Ise Shrine, after celebrating the famous places (and savoring the famous products) encountered en route.

As Bashō wrote in the preface to *Narrow Road to the Deep North*, “Life itself is a journey; and as for those who spend their days upon the waters in ships and those who grow old leading their horses, their very home is the open road. And some poets of old there were who died while traveling.”²⁶ When the gods beckoned, it was impossible for Bashō to stay home, despite the dangers on which he dwelt at length. He abandoned his house — but not before inscribing a poem on one of its pillars in the time-honored tradition of Saigyō — mended his traveling clothes, strengthened his legs with moxa, and set off, dressed as a monk, with an attendant named Sora.

Bashō’s chronicle contains as much melancholy as that of any Heian-period poet at the height of cherry blossom season. At the ruins of the Satō family’s castle at Maruyama (scroll 1, section 6), which he visited on the fifth day of the fifth month, Bashō “wet his sleeves” (wept) at a monument commemorating the poignant legend of the battle-widowed wives of this local warrior family.²⁷ The women had donned their dead husbands’ armor so their mother-in-law could pretend to see her sons return victorious. At Hiraizumi, the next scene in the scroll (section 1.7), Bashō likened the glory of the three generations of northern Fujiwara to a “brief-remembered dream. . . . But what a fleeting thing



cat. 179
Andō Hiroshige,
Dawn in Shinagawa, from
*Fifty-three Stations of
the Tōkaidō*, 1833–1834,
color woodblock print,
approx. 26 x 38 (10 1/4 x 15),
Nippon Express, Co.,
Ltd., Tokyo

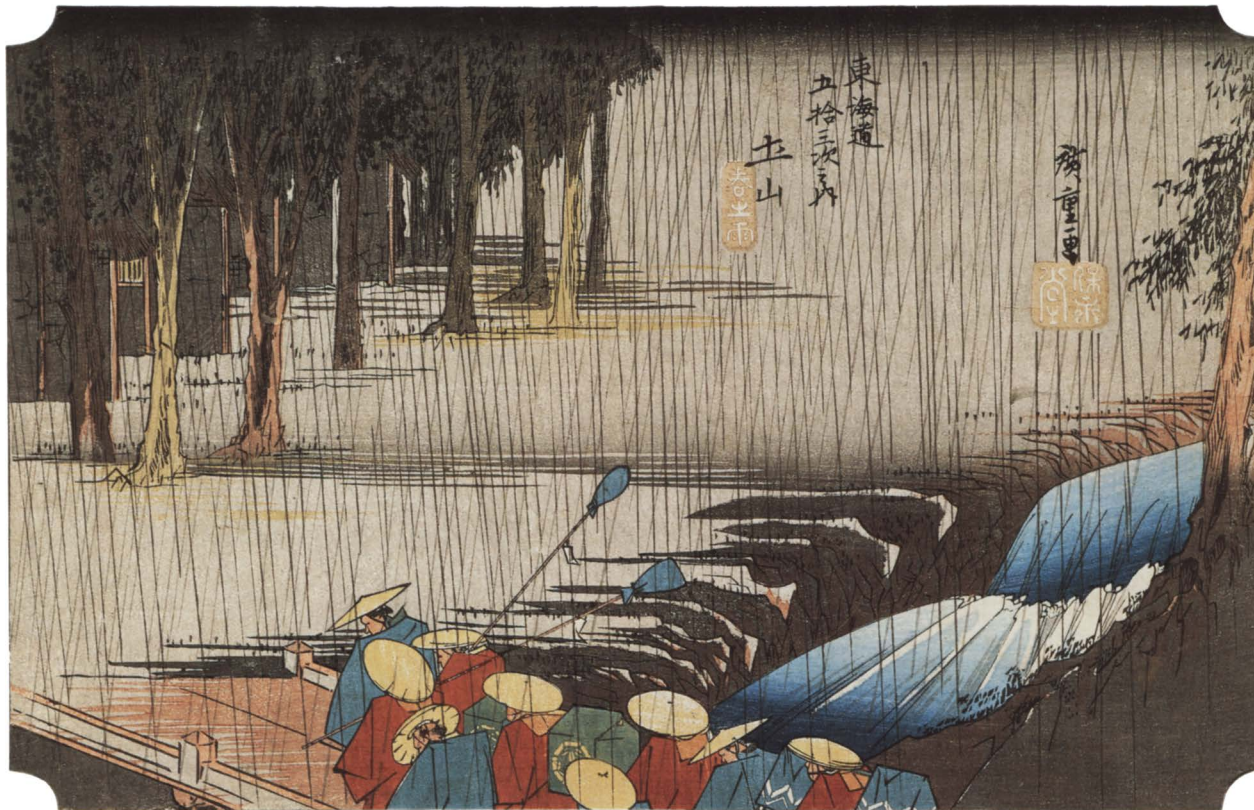
is military glory.”²⁸ Bashō may have traveled with his physical eyes on the road, but his inner eyes were glued on the landscape of the intellect. Such richly learned allusions clearly assume that no uneducated person is capable of true travel.²⁹

While Bashō strove for the appearance of spontaneity, it is obvious that he crafted his record of his journey to the northern provinces with painstaking care. When the diary of his companion, Sora, came to light a number of years ago, readers were shocked to discover just how extensive was the license Bashō had taken with the “facts.” He altered dates and places in the service of his art.

In re-creating the historical journeys of his literary predecessors, Bashō strove to leave a legacy that would become a part of the past-present-future continuum, just as Lady Nijō expressed the desire to replicate Saigyō’s travels and leave a record that would outlive her. Bashō would have been pleased to know that Bashō landmarks were erected all over the northern provinces (and all over Japan for that matter). He would have been delighted that someone like Buson came along to refurbish his rustic hut, retrace his journey, distribute his portrait, and illustrate his travel diaries.

One cannot but wonder, however, what Bashō would have made of Buson’s reworking of *Narrow Road to the Deep North* (cat. 168). By choosing to reproduce certain scenes visually in addition to presenting them verbally in the text, Buson subverted the melancholy mood of Bashō’s original. The choice of images invests the diary with a lightness (the aesthetic value of *karumi*) that counteracts the sorrow suffusing Bashō’s narrative. Buson foregrounds the unexceptional: the little girl Kasane chasing Bashō’s horse at Nasuno (1.2); the blind *biwa* player in the inn at Suematsuyama (1.5); the disagreeable (but probably all too common) exchange with the guards at the Barrier Gate at Shitomae (1.8); the strapping country guide at the dreaded Natagiri Pass (2.1); the prostitutes at Ichifuri (2.4); and the meeting with

cat. 184
 Andō Hiroshige,
Spring Rain at Tsuchiyama,
 from *Fifty-three Stations*
 of the Tōkaidō, 1833–1834,
 color woodblock print,
 approx. 26 x 38 (10 1/4 x 15),
 Nippon Express, Co.,
 Ltd., Tokyo



his friend Tōsai's rustic country wife at Fukui (2.6). This selection accords with Buson's credo of using the mundane to transcend the mundane.³⁰

Interspersed with pictorialization of the everyday are some — but not too many — references to the past. These include Saigyō's chestnut tree at Sukagawa, a pun turning on the character element meaning “west” that appears both in the name of Saigyō and the word “chestnut” (1.3); the jar-shaped stone memorial commemorating a castle built in the early eighth century (1.4); and the wives of the Satō clan at Maruyama, whom Buson playfully made to look like Boy's Festival dolls, a witty turn on Bashō's poem noting that he visited the place on Boy's Day, the fifth day of the fifth month (1.6). When he came to Bashō's passage waxing nostalgic about the deeply tragic events that took place at Hiraizumi, Buson pictured Bashō and Sora seated in conversation instead of showing any of the great northern Fujiwara (1.7).

Buson reintroduced the quality of artlessness that Bashō had banished from his own travel illustrations. While Buson's formal portraits of Bashō (cat. 167) are descriptive and dignified, his illustrations designed to accompany haikai prose are abbreviated and informal. With the exception of the jar-shaped memorial, Buson visualized the diary exclusively through the human figure, audaciously deleting Bashō's beloved landscape. With an economy of means — a few deft outlines and touches of color — Buson suggested a spectrum of humanity: the stalwart physicality of the young guide at Natagiri, the childish exuberance of Kasane and her brother, the minatory authority of the provincial barrier-keeper at Shitomae, and the coyly weeping prostitutes at Ichifuri.

In casting about for how to pictorialize this relatively new, and as yet unformed, genre of the illustrated haikai journal, Buson reverted to that classic East Asian solution for doing something radical:

he put a new spin on tradition. The medieval genre of priests’ journeys, particularly the illustrated *Life of Saigyō*, seems to have provided Buson with the alternating text-image handscroll format.³¹ The abbreviated figure style he devised to accompany works in the *hokku* vein also has roots in medieval *Yamatoe*: witty figures in a similar cursory treatment adorn the anonymous sixteenth-century *Scenes In and Around Kyoto* (fig. 5).

If Bashō was preoccupied with the impermanence of life, the “heroes” of *Shank’s Mare*, Yaji and Kita, former lovers and now companionable rakes, were absorbed with the twin impermanences of money and carnal love.³² Bashō suggests in his preface to *Narrow Road to the Deep North* that a journey is a poetical and philosophical undertaking. But Ikku’s preface to *Shank’s Mare* warns, “You will find many bad jokes and much that is worthless in [this] book.”³³ If Bashō used his voyages to examine his own subjectivity, Yaji and Kita travel precisely to sink theirs. On the road they impersonate others (including samurai and even the author, Ikku), insult waitresses, bilk the blind, snitch food, lose their loincloths, pun endlessly, write execrable poetry, and bounce back when they cheerfully hit bottom. Their prolonged dilations on gustatory pleasures — Mariko’s grated potato broth, Sayanonaka’s rice cakes with syrup, Arai’s famous eels, Kuwana’s baked clams — whet the reader’s appetite, only to take it right away with their Laurel-and-Hardy-esque dialogue. (“Waitress: ‘Will you eat your rice with clams?’ Yaji: ‘No, we’ll eat it with chopsticks’”).³⁴

Ikku incorporated echoes of Bashō as affectionate parody. Bashō was kept awake at the inn at Suematsuyama by the singing of the blind biwa player; at Akasaka the slumber of Yaji and Kita was similarly disturbed — by amorous goings-on in the next room.³⁵ Bashō, honoring Saigyō, left a poem about the Shirakawa Barrier (“After all, I could hardly pass that barrier without writing a single line”).³⁶ At the Sainokawara Barrier Ikku’s characters compose a silly poem about blowing through the barrier like papers in a spring wind — an example of what has wittily been described as the “dumbing-down” of Edo-period travel poetry.³⁷ Bashō displays knowledge of places so deep as to be practically bottomless; Yaji, too, is complimented by one of his palanquin bearers because he knows so much about the local area (“‘You fool,’ said the carrier behind. ‘Of course he does. He’s looking in the guidebook as he goes along. Ha-ha-ha!’”).³⁸ There is an ocean of difference between Bashō’s metaphysical musings and Ikku’s Alice-in-Wonderland riddles to while away the time on the road (“Kita: ‘Can you tell me where we come from?’ Yaji: ‘From the house of Yajirobei in Hatchōbori, Kanda.’ Kita: ‘Don’t make bad jokes. The answer is two pigs and ten puppies’”).³⁹

Yet the process of pictorialization acts as a leveler. Hiroshige and Buson, both keen observers of the world around them, were bound by, and worked within, the heritage of *Yamatoe*. Although there is a difference between their stylistic languages, they draw upon vast wellsprings of a lyrical narrative tradition. Indeed inspection of some of Hiroshige’s figures — notably the malevolent waitress-innkeeper at Goyu — reveals the common debt he and Buson owe to the deft, cursory figure style found in *Yamatoe* handscrolls or screen paintings (see fig. 5). Able to manipulate a medium that makes use of images viewed in a temporal sequence, both artists knew well how to exploit the devices of juxtaposition and contrast.

Just in the six selections from Hiroshige’s *Fifty-six Stations of the Tōkaidō* (cats. 179–184) there exists a complex network of contrasts: between the moods of dawn (at Shinagawa) and dusk (at Mariko); between high (samurai procession at Tsuchiyama) and low (prostitute-waitresses coercing travelers at Goyu); between vast vistas (at Kanaya) and intimate ones (at Tsuchiyama); between



cat. 167
Yosa Buson, *Portrait of Bashō*,
third quarter of
eighteenth century,
hanging scroll;
ink and light color on silk,
92.2 x 32 (38⁵/₈ x 12⁵/₈)
Itsuo Art Museum, Osaka



fig. 5
Detail from figure 1

humor (at Goyu) and seriousness (daimyo procession at Tsuchiyama); between rain (at Tsuchiyama) and a beautiful sky (at Mariko); and between anecdotal details of a river crossing (at Rokugō) and a “cooler” distant view (at Kanaya).

Hiroshige throughout the series decorously neutralized Ikku’s high-spirited vulgarity. He surely took into account, however, the likelihood that the majority of his audience was familiar with Ikku’s wildly popular comic novel. There is an intertextual exchange between the two where the ghost of Ikku adds its little giggle to Hiroshige’s hymn of tribute to the open road. At the Rokugō crossing, for example (cat. 180), which Hiroshige treated as a narrative of picturesque ruralism, Ikku had Yaji and Kita harassing the waitress, misreading the painting in the alcove, getting in trouble for failing to genuflect to a passing daimyo procession, and exchanging a rude observation about the pageant of marching samurai (“Kita: ‘Look at the helmets of those fellows with the bows. They look as though their heads were swollen.’ Yaji: ‘And look at the length of their cloaks; you can see their whatyoumay-callems peeping out’”).⁴⁰ Hiroshige had in fact depicted a daimyo procession in the preceding print of Shinagawa (cat. 179), showing them with the sobriety appropriate to their station. A close analysis of the relationship between Ikku’s text and Hiroshige’s illustrations would reveal a logic of intertextuality as carefully crafted as Buson’s reinterpretation of Bashō.

Both Buson and Hiroshige took a work of travel literature as their point of departure, retraced the journey personally, and pictorialized the original with an immediacy born of direct experience, all the time operating within the boundaries of the Japanese visual narrative tradition. In both cases the artist’s own vision changed the nature of the original text substantially, particularly mitigating the extremes to which Bashō and Ikku were prone. Just as Buson represented Bashō’s diary in at least seven versions (each different), so Hiroshige created more than one thousand different designs of the fifty-three stages of the Tōkaidō.⁴¹ It was perhaps a deep, emotional commitment to their respective subjects that spurred these artists to reach so profoundly into their imaginations and produce works that invested mundane experience with transcendent timelessness.

SEEING IS KNOWING

Although the categories of scenic views offered up for contemplation to the Japanese audience did not undergo much change over a millennium — “pure” landscapes, cityscapes, famous literary or religious landscapes, and travel imagery were staples of the Japanese landscape painter’s diet — the manner of depiction underwent thoroughgoing transformation during the Edo period. One striking feature is the enormous number of artists working in experimental modes of painting that were virtually nonexistent when the Edo period dawned. If “empiricism” is perhaps too strong a word to use in all cases, one can certainly speak about a new visuality, a way of seeing — and rendering — that gives Edo painting its character.

The “raiment” of style always clothes the “body” of the landscape. The choice of style is not neutral. Style and ideology are sisters. Style communicates as much meaning as subject. And painting style became bound up with the act of looking to a degree never witnessed before.⁴²

Seeing became a form of privileged knowledge during the Edo period. It was equated with virtue in the Confucian system.⁴³ It was invested with powers of protection. Consider the western-style sketches by Tani Bunchō (cat. 185) from his tour of coastal defenses with Chief Councilor Matsudaira Sadanobu.⁴⁴ Conversely, the same style carried ideological overtones that were threatening to other

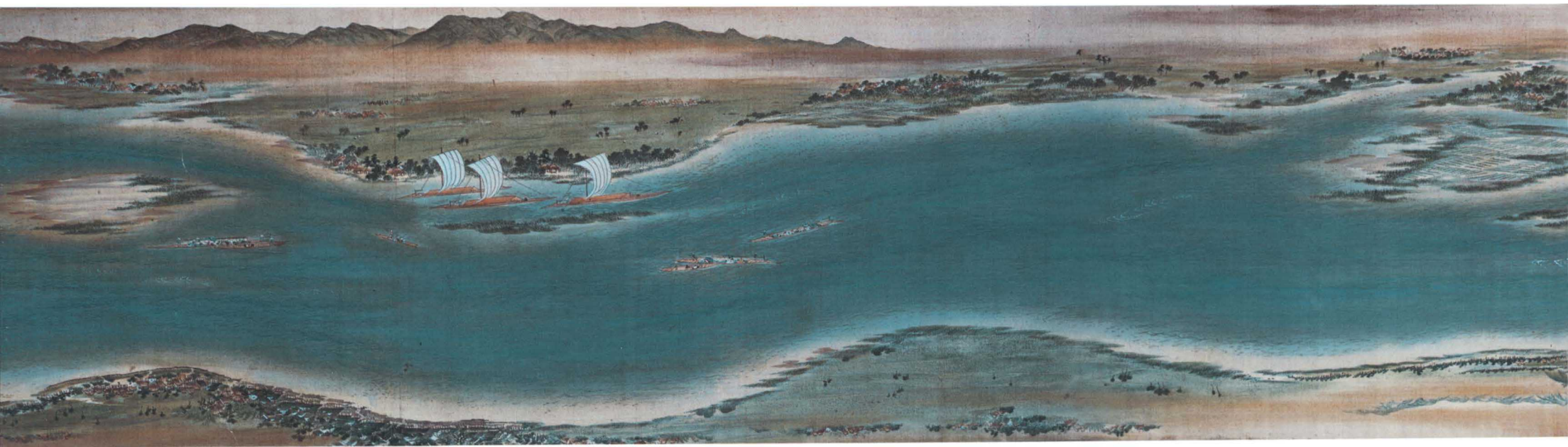
groups. The Shinto priests at the Atago Shrine who received the oil-style painting *The Seven-League Beach* from Shiba Kōkan (cat. 186) perceived the western-style realism it displayed to be offensive to the native gods. They had the painting removed. Odd gaps appear when the traditional function of painting — to reveal vast emotional, literary, and other kinds of interior worlds (as witnessed by the multiple nuances cued into depictions of famous places) — gives way to the encroaching notion that the ideology of vision might be an end in itself. Paintings like *Scenes of Japan* by Odano Naotake (cat. 187) strip away the emotional resonance from the traditional topographical scene, and substitute western technique (the lowered horizon, unified light source, and *repoussoir*) as the subject, leaving an image one imagines would be unsatisfying to contemporary viewers other than ardent Europhiles.

People of the Edo period were insatiably, relentlessly curious. The complexity of society was reflected in the complexity of the art market, whose diverse clientele lacked the investment in tradition that tied previous high-ranking patrons to accepted formal language. Experimentation with imported techniques provided welcome stimulation in rethinking the traditional processes of picture making.

It is a relatively simple matter to mimic western-style linear perspective while rendering form itself in the traditional flat, outlined style. This was the approach taken in *Korean Mission* by Hanegawa Tōei and in *Nihonbashi* by Katsushika Hokusai (cats. 155, 173). Japanese artists, however, never accepted (or perhaps never realized) that one-point perspective, itself the product of elaborate Renaissance notions of the relation between the human and the divine, “suggests a single person and an unmoving eye.”⁴⁵ Hence in these two pictures perspective became but one element of a new experimental order of viewing. Embedded in the rhetorical messages of the pictures is the notion that the mundane was fixed in the grid that literally held human affairs in (visual) coherence, while the supramundane, such as Mount Fuji or the shogun’s castle, operated independently of these strictures/structures.

Many artists devoted themselves to an innovative opticity in the rendition of forms. It had taken a millennium to progress from depiction of seasons — the first temporal element in Japanese painting — and the occasional introduction of the nocturnal view by simple means of a darkened sky.

cat. 190
Maruyama Ōkyo
Both Banks of the Yodo River,
1765, handscroll;
ink and color on silk,
40.2 x 1690.5 (15⁷/₈ x 665¹/₂),
The Arc-en-Ciel
Foundation, Tokyo



Edo artists began seriously to render the effects of weather (Hiroshige, cats. 149, 184), clouds (Hokusai, cat. 171), sky (Kōkan, cat. 186), time of day (Hiroshige, cats. 179, 181; Hokusai, cat. 176), the play of light across form (Naotake, cats. 187, 188), and even fleeting visual phenomena like fireworks (Hiroshige, cat. 147). It was as if they began seriously to use their own eyes for the first time. Thus Naotake's *Shinobazu Pond* (cat. 188), with its bizarre oversized flowers modeled in light and shade, becomes less disturbing when we realize that the subject of the picture is not so much Shinobazu Pond itself as the superiority of the gaze that takes in the fall of light and records it. Even traditional schema such as Watanabe Shikō's *Flowers and Trees of the Four Seasons* (cat. 162) are given new immediacy as a result of this emphasis on mimesis, based on seeing, understanding, and transcribing form. The real is even put to the service of the visionary (the surreal), as in Nagasawa Rosetsu's *Mount Fuji and Cranes* (cat. 158).

277

Naotake's *Shinobazu Pond* may not resemble Taiga's *Wondrous Scenery of Mutsu* and *True View of Kojima Bay* (cats. 164, 166), but the two artists, along with many others, share the endeavor to create the effects of light playing on form. Maruyama Ōshin and Maruyama Ōkyo (cats. 189, 190) are engaged with resolving the tension between the character of the East Asian brush — an instrument designed first and foremost to deliver line, which they augmented with the use of a nontraditional flat brush (*hake*) — and the modeling of form, which is undercut by outline. Here is the classic case of Heinrich Wölfflin's "linear" versus "painterly."

It is no coincidence that during the Edo period numerous optical devices — telescopes, microscopes, zograscope, peep shows, and eyeglasses — became the rage. By the late Edo period western photography was known in Japan.⁴⁶ These instruments, too, fueled the revolution, not only in seeing, but in the radical shift of episteme to which it was linked. As one Edo-period thinker mused, "The microscope exceeds even the Buddha's eyes."⁴⁷

An immediate legacy of these transformers of the action of looking (and the concomitant redefinition of humanity's place in the universe) is the new emphasis on the panorama, the endeavor to convey the limitlessness of physical space within a finite picture space. Infinity is nowhere so





cat. 187
 Odano Naotake, *Scenes of Japan*,
 two hanging scrolls;
 ink and color on silk,
 each 119.8 x 43.4 (47 1/4 x 17 1/8),
 Shōgenji, Mie

evident as in the heavens, so it is no coincidence that this new way of seeing opened up vistas by means of the lowered horizon and a spacious, naturalistic sky. Probably underlying this new emphasis on putting objects in their (measured) place within a vast space was the growing realization that Japan was a small island within an enormous, unknown outside world. And perhaps it is not stretching credulity too much to associate the arrival of pronounced circular compositions in the late eighteenth century, such as Naotake's *Shinobazu Pond* and Ōshin's *Lake Biwa* (cats. 188, 189), with the circular view through the telescope, and even more fundamentally, with the curved contours that circumscribe the human eye's natural field of vision.

The panoramic view was not new to Japan, nor indeed was the handscroll format, but the attempt to combine these with the depiction of measurable space and a perceptible horizon line produced astonishingly innovative schemes, such as Bunchō's *Traveling by Boat in Kumano* and Ōkyo's *Both Banks of the Yodo River* (cats. 185, 190). With a handscroll, artists seeking to suggest infinite space on a two-dimensional format could put off indefinitely the termination of the view simply by adding additional pieces of paper. In theory the image *could* extend forever! While Bunchō presents one horizon line, Ōkyo manages to produce two, affording a simultaneous multiple perspective that is both conceptual and perceptual.

These two paintings are a good place to conclude. They fold the emotional, literary, and historical aspects of famous places — what is felt and known — into the theme of travel. Both represent journeys over space and time. They build on ancient formats and styles. The archaic blue green and gold manner that formed the basis of Yamatoe and the topos of the riverboat journey are both venerable, thousand-year-old Chinese inventions. The two pictures respectively invoke the time-honored conventions of written labels and multiple perspectives seen in the ancient mapping tradition (cats. 141, 142), but they also partake of the new Edo vision. They seem to possess space by measuring it, scaling it, parsing it, and describing it. They assert the viewer's place, flexibly but rationally, in the larger scheme. And they attest to the endless mutability of landscape as a cultural process.

1

John O'Donohue, *Stone the Tabernacle of Memory* (Galway, 1994), 2.

2

H. E. Plutschow, *Chaos and Cosmos: Ritual in Early and Medieval Japanese Literature* (Leiden, 1990), 114.

3

The source text for this notion is *Shōzon engi*. See Allan Grapard, "Flying Mountains and Walkers of Emptiness: Toward a Definition of Sacred Space in Japanese Religions," *History of Religion* 27, no. 3 (1982), 195–221.

4

For the importance of Kumano as a cult center, see David Moerman, "The Ideology of Landscape and the Theater of State: Insei Pilgrimage to Kumano (1090–1220)," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 24, no. 3–4 (fall 1997), 347–374.

5

For the relationship of Fuji and Maitreya, see Martin Collcutt, "Mt. Fuji as the Realm of Miroku: The Transformation of Maitreya in the Cult of Mt. Fuji in Early Modern Japan," in *Maitreya, the Future Buddha*, ed. Alan Sponberg and Helen Hardacre (Cambridge, 1988), 248–269. Two treatments of the problem of the blood-pool hells are Caroline R. Flaxman, "Metamorphoses and the Cult of Tateyama," unpublished paper; and Takemi Momoko, "'Menstruation Sutra' Belief in Japan," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 10, no. 2–3 (1983), 229–246.

6

Hokusai's involvement with Mount Fuji is treated in Henry D. Smith II, *Hokusai: One Hundred Views of Mt. Fuji* (New York, 1988).

7

Edward Kamens, *Utamakura, Allusion, and Intertextuality in Traditional Japanese Poetry* (New Haven, 1997), 142.

8

Nishiyama Matsunosuke, *Edo Culture: Daily Life and Diversions in Urban Japan, 1600–1868* (Honolulu, 1997), 85.

9

Nobuyuki Yuasa, *Bashō: The Narrow Road to the Deep North and Other Travel Sketches* (Middlesex, 1979), 161 n. 33.

10

Eric Hirsch, introduction, "Landscape: Between Place and Space," in *The Anthropology of Landscape: Perspectives on Place and Space*, ed. Eric Hirsch and Michael O'Hanlon (Oxford, 1995), 23.

11

Only Holland and England, it is claimed, had a higher proportion of urbanization. See Gary Leupp, *Servants, Shophands, and Laborers in the Cities of Tokugawa Japan* (Princeton, 1992), 12.

12

James Cahill, *Three Alternative Histories of Chinese Painting* (Lawrence, Kans., 1988), 55.

13

See Henry D. Smith II, "Tokyo as an Idea: An Exploration of Japanese Urban Thought until 1945," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 4, no. 1 (winter 1978), 45–80, for the contrasting ideologies and conceptions of the city prevalent during the Edo period (and later).

14

Quoted in Constantine Nomi-kos Vapori, *Breaking Barriers: Travel and the State in Early Modern Japan* (Cambridge, Mass., 1994), 224.

15

See Henry D. Smith II, *Hiroshige: One Hundred Famous Views of Edo* (New York, 1986). Extensive reproductions of Edo city guidebooks may be found in Asakura Haruhiko, ed., *Edo no kan II*, vol. 4 of *Nihon meisho fūzoku zue* (Tokyo, 1980).

16

Introduction to *Landscape and Power*, ed. W. J. T. Mitchell (Chicago, 1994), 2.

17

For a study of the mechanics of the diffusion of court culture, see Carolyn Wheelwright, ed., *Word in Flower: The Visualization of Classical Literature in Seventeenth-Century Japan* (New Haven, 1989).

18

See Helen Mitsu Nagata, "Images of the Tales of Ise," in Wheelwright 1989, 54–83.

19

See Melinda Takeuchi, *Taiga's True Views: The Language of Landscape Painting in Eighteenth-Century Japan* (Stanford, 1992), 102–112; Kamens 1997; Joshua S. Mostow, *Pictures of the Heart: The Hyakunin Isshu in Word and Image* (Honolulu, 1996), 88–93.

20

Reproduced in *Japan*, vol. 2 of *Freer Gallery of Art* (Tokyo, 1972), no. 104.

21

Plutschow 1990, 88–89.

22

Gustav Heldt, "Saigyō's Traveling Tale: A Translation of *Saigyō Monogatari*," *Monumenta Nipponica* 52, no. 4 (winter 1997), 472.

23

Gary Ebersole, *Ritual Poetry and the Politics of Death in Early Japan* (Princeton, 1989), 20.

24

See Vapori 1994; Lawrence Bresler, "The Origins of Popular Travel and Travel Literature in Japan" (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1975); William H. Coaldrake, "Unno: Edo Period Post Town of the Central Japan Alps," *Asian Art* 5, no. 2 (spring 1992), 9–30; Asakura Haruhiko, ed., *Nihon meisho fūzoku zue*, 18 vols., 2 suppl. vols. (Tokyo, 1979–1988).

25

Haikai is the name for a seventeen-syllable form of verse popularly known today as haiku. In the Edo period a single verse was called a *hokku*, while the genre itself was known as haikai. Bashō's diary prose is not only heavily sprinkled with haikai, it mimics the witty bite of the verse form.

26

Matsuo Bashō, *A Haiku Journey: Bashō's Narrow Road to a Far Province*, trans. Dorothy Britton (Tokyo, 1984), 29. Among the number of translations of Bashō's text, this is the loosest but the most poetic.

27

Bashō 1984, 44. Saigyō's family name was Satō, so perhaps this episode from the Satō clan had particular meaning for Bashō. In court poetry to "wet one's sleeves" was to shed tears and wipe them away.

28

Bashō 1984, 56–57. For accounts of the northern Fujiwara and their culture, see Mimi Hall Yiengpruksawan, *Hiraizumi: Buddhist Art and Regional Politics in Twelfth-Century Japan*, East Asian Monographs (Cambridge, Mass., 1998).

- 29 In addition to the numerous references to Saigyō, one finds allusions to Kūkai (774–835), the saintly founder of the Shingon sect of Buddhism; Lady Tamamo, the concubine of Emperor Konoe (1139–1155); Nasu no Yoichi, the legendary archer of the Genji in the Battle of Yashima (1185) during the Genpei Wars; En no Gyōja, the eighth-century founder of the mountain-climbing cult of Shugendō; the Heian-period scholar Fujiwara no Kiyosuke (1104–1177); and Benkei and Yoshitsune, the tragic twelfth-century Minamoto warriors. On and on, the relentless incantation of the Japanese past is invoked like an encyclopedia. Not only did Bashō weave in narratives of ancient Japan, as the passages quoted above demonstrate, but he frequently alluded to China. Besides the great Tang poet Du Fu and Yang Hu’s (221–278) “Weeping Tomb” (so named because no one could see the memorial marker without breaking into tears), Bashō also works in references to worthies like Yuanmiao (1238–1295), a Chinese priest who confined himself in a cave for fifteen years, and Fayun (466–529), another Chinese priest who lived in a small hut on a high rock. It is difficult to imagine a reader, then or now, sufficiently erudite to comprehend all of Bashō’s many arcane references without the benefit of extensive textual glosses.
- 30 Calvin L. French, *The Poet-Painters: Buson and His Followers* (Ann Arbor, 1974), 25.
- 31 For a list of extant paintings treating Saigyō’s biography, see Penelope E. Mason, “The Wilderness Journey: The Soteric Value of Nature in Japanese Narrative Painting,” in *Art, the Ape of Nature: Studies in Honor of H. W. Janson*, ed. Moshe Barasch and Lucy Freeman Sandler (New York, 1981), 76–77. See also Laura W. Allen, “The Art of Persuasion: Narrative, Structure, Imagery, and Meaning in the ‘Saigyō Monogatari Emaki’” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1988). I am grateful to Laura Allen for discussing with me possible connections between the Saigyō scrolls and *Narrow Road to the Deep North*.
- 32 From the “Afterthought Introduction” to Jippensha Ikku, *Hizakurige or Shank’s Mare*, trans. Thomas Satchell (Rutland, Vt., 1960), 369.
- 33 Ikku 1960, 19.
- 34 Ikku 1960, 171.
- 35 Ikku 1960, 144.
- 36 Bashō 1984, 41.
- 37 Ian MacDonald, “Classical Poetry as Cultural Signifier: Comic Travel Literature and the Emergence of National Identity in the Edo Period,” unpublished paper, 1997.
- 38 Ikku 1960, 38.
- 39 Ikku 1960, 39. This is a typical goofy pun. The answer lies in the explanation “because there are two of us and we come from Kantō.” Two people (*futari*) must turn on a pun for “pig” (*buta*), and “Kantō” puns on the Sino-Japanese reading *ken* for “dog” (in low-class Edo dialect pronounced interchangeably with *kan*) combined with the word for “ten” (*tō*).
- 40 Ikku 1960, 25.
- 41 Roger Keyes, “Hiroshige’s Tōkaidō Prints,” in *Tōkaidō: On the Road — Pilgrimage, Travel and Culture*, ed. Stephen Addiss (Lawrence, Kans., 1982), 46–68. See especially page 47. Other versions of Buson’s *Narrow Road to the Deep North* may be found in the Yamagata Museum, the Itsuō Museum, the Hirayama Collection, and the Commission for the Protection of Cultural Properties. A copy of a lost scroll dated 1777 is in the Kakie Museum.
- 42 For a wonderful exploration of aspects of this problem, see Timon Screech, *The Western Scientific Gaze and Popular Imagery in Later Edo Japan: The Lens within the Heart* (Cambridge, 1996).
- 43 See Takeuchi 1992, 114–118.
- 44 Reproduced and discussed in Sherman E. Lee, *Reflections of Reality in Japanese Art* (Cleveland, 1983), 280–281, no. 120.
- 45 Ronald Paulson, *Literary Landscape: Turner and Constable* (New Haven, 1982), 3. Timon Screech has argued that western perspective was never taken seriously because it was associated with (western) print culture. See his “The Meaning of Western Perspective in Edo Popular Culture,” *Archives of Asian Art* 47 (1994), 58–69.
- 46 Smith 1986, no. 27 (unpaged).
- 47 Screech 1996, vi. The quote is from Tachibana Nankei, *Record of Pleasurable Travels in the West*, 1798.

Travel and Landscape: Catalogue 141 – 190

141
Large dish with map of Japan and surrounding countries

c. 1830/1843
Hizen ware, Koimari style
Porcelain with underglaze cobalt blue
Diameter 48 (18⁷/₈)
The Kyushu Ceramic Museum, Saga

• A large horizontal map of Japan on the interior of this dish is framed by two large flying cranes and six cloud bands surrounded by islands and partial landmasses, all labeled. The northern section of the main island of Honshu is foreshortened, and the northern island of Hokkaido is only partly depicted. Lake Biwa is clearly visible in the center of the main island, and Mount Fuji is drawn as a large outline. Contiguous boundary lines define each domain, and distances between the domains and the amount of rice that they produced are often noted. The cities of Nagasaki, Kyoto, Osaka, Sakai, Edo, Oshu, Mimaiya, and Hakodate are indicated.

The last two cities were relatively small at this time but might have been included because a ferry ran from Mimaiya (in northern Honshu) to Hakodate (in Hokkaido). The most important cities are connected by major highways. The four landmasses shown surrounding Japan are — in clockwise order from the top — the Land of the Dwarves, the Land of Women, the Ryūkyū Kingdom (Okinawa), and Korea.

The exterior of the dish is decorated with a wave pattern (carrying over the motif of the ocean from the interior of the dish), and a simplified lotus motif encircles the footring.

Dishes decorated with map scenes date primarily to the late Edo period. This large dish has a six-character mark in the footring reading “made in the Tenpō era” (1830–1843). The piece is possibly from the Tataranomoto kiln, where similarly patterned sherds were excavated. The plate was made in a mold, but the cobalt blue lines do not correspond exactly with the molded contours. Like the maps on similar dishes, this one is done in a style developed by Gyōgi Bosatsu, an eighth-century wandering Japanese monk, who is credited with drawing the first map to rely on conceptual distances rather than cartographic verity. NCR

142
Large dish with map of the world and distances from Japan

c.1830/1843
Hizen ware, Koimari style
Porcelain with underglaze cobalt blue
Diameter 52.8 (20³/₄)
The Kyushu Ceramic Museum, Saga

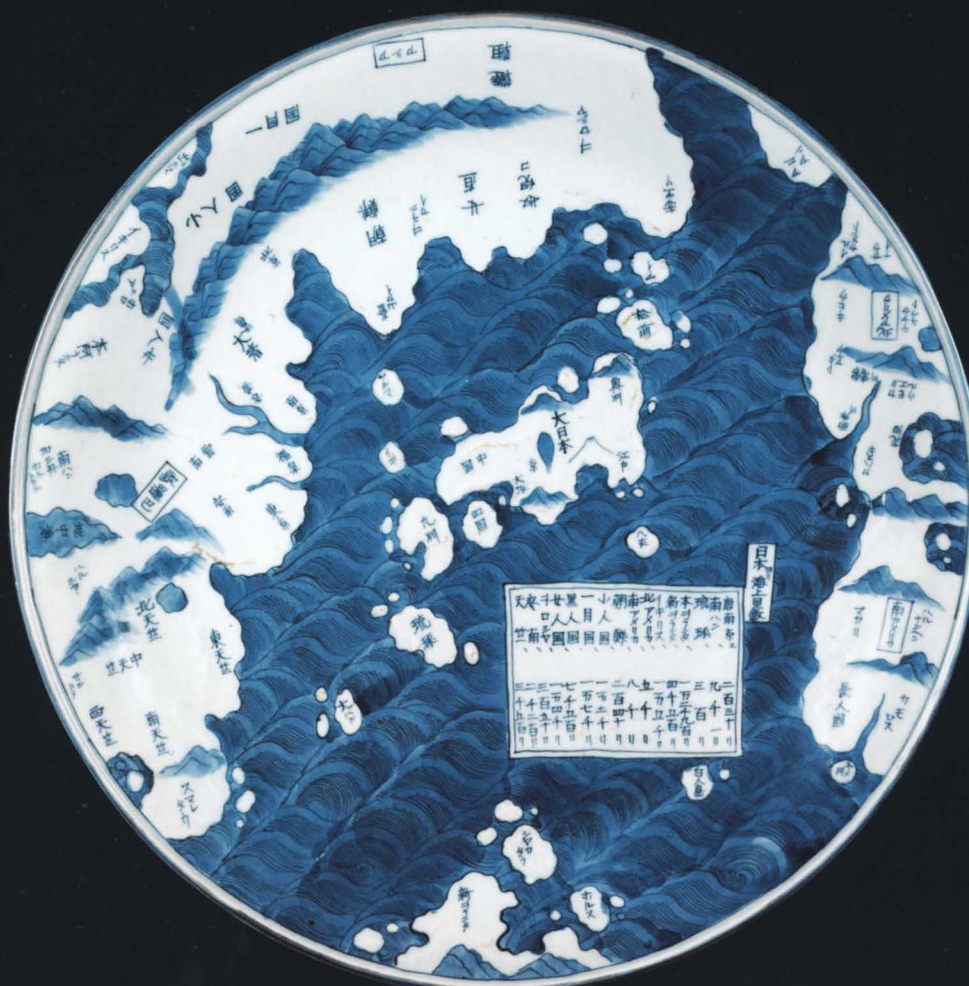
• Although geographically accurate maps of the world were made in Japan in the second half of the Edo period, deliberate distortions were made in cartographic designs on porcelain dishes, made in quantity in the Tenpō era. What appeared to be important was the relationship between Japan and other countries, particularly with regard to conceptual distances. Japan was placed reassuringly at the center, surrounded by water and islands and various landmasses. Revolving around Japan (not overly enlarged) on this dish are South and North America, Korea, Russia, China, India, and Europe. Imaginary lands are depicted as well: those of dwarves, white people, black people, and women. The distances from these countries to Japan, measured in *ri* (1 *ri* = 3.9 km), are written in a cartouche to the right of Japan.

The stylized islands are set within a sea of wave patterns. “Great Japan” (*Dai Nippon*) is written in the center of the main island, and the cities of Edo, Kyoto, and Osaka are highlighted. The domains are not separately delineated, but a white Mount Fuji can clearly be seen on the main island, along with Lake Biwa and three mountain ranges. The exterior displays a simple wave pattern, which plays against the islands and water design on the interior to make the dish itself into an island.

A new awareness of the outside world and a concomitant growing sense of nationhood, perhaps encouraged by sightings of American and Russian ships, made such dishes attractive to consumers. Large plates of this kind were originally made for the domestic market; similar sherds found at the Kamanotani kiln site in Arita suggest the origin of this porcelain, marked “made in the Tenpō era.” The dish was formed in a mold, with molded relief lines, but the cobalt blue painting does not align precisely. NCR



I41



I42



143
Kosode fragments on screen with
Eight Views of Ōmi

Second half of eighteenth century
Ink painting and dip-dyeing on
silk crepe
171 x 190 (67¹/₄ x 74⁷/₈)
National Museum of Japanese History,
Chiba, Nomura Collection

• The province of Ōmi lies strategically located adjacent to Kyoto. In addition to its turbulent military history — it was the site of one of the ancient capitals prior to the founding of Kyoto and a haven for the refugee Ashikaga shogun fearing assassination — Ōmi accumulated venerable layers of literary history as well. In imitation of the Chinese theme of the Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers, in 1500 a Japanese poet selected eight corresponding views in Japan, which subsequently became canonized: Evening Snow on Mount Hira, Geese Descending at Katata, Evening Rain at Karasaki, Evening Bell at Miidera, Sunset Glow over the Seta

Bridge, Clearing Mist at Awazu, Sails Returning to Yabase, and Autumn Moon over Ishiyamadera.

Large areas of color created by dipping sections of the white silk crepe (*chirimen*) into a purple, yellow, or blue dye vat produced forms that resemble clouds on paintings of Scenes In and Around Kyoto. The clouds are an artistic device used to represent large distances between various sites in an abbreviated way. On these kosode fragments ink-drawn (*kakie*) views of Ōmi are interspersed between the soft outlines of colorful dip-dyed (*tsukezome*) clouds. MT/SST



144

144
Kosode with Views of Kyoto

Mid-eighteenth century
Paste-resist dyeing, tie-dyeing, and
silk and metallic thread embroidery
on silk crepe

149 x 130.6 (58⁵/₈ x 51³/₈)

National Museum of Japanese History,
Chiba, Nomura Collection

- The city of Kyoto, seat of the emperor since the late ninth century, had over time acquired numerous beloved scenic spots (*meisho*), both natural and fabricated. Some of them are shown here (from the top):

Kiyomizudera; a stretch of elegant row houses; the pagoda of the Yasaka Shrine; and one of the great bridges over the Kamo River. Natural sights include the Otowa Falls and the Eastern Hills. The designer also included allusions to flower-and-bird painting and to the four seasons as well as genre scenes such as the picnic under the cherry blossoms at the upper left. This marvelous souvenir of the city incorporated timeless imagery into the latest fashion.

The scenes on this kosode are rendered in a multicolored paste-resist dye technique called *yuzen-dyeing* (*yuzenzome*) among golden clouds

created with tie-dyeing (*nuishime shibori*). In *yuzen-dyeing*, developed around the last quarter of the seventeenth century, thin lines of rice paste define shapes that resist dyes applied with a brush. After the dyes are set, the paste is washed away. The method makes it possible to create elaborate pictorial illustrations on textiles. During the Edo period *yuzen* designs were popular with all classes, especially the townspeople. This example, like many *yuzen* pieces, is enhanced with embroidery in colorful silk and lustrous gold metallic threads. MT/SST

145
Andō Hiroshige (1797 – 1858)
Hatsune Riding Grounds, from
One Hundred Famous Views of Edo

1856
Color woodblock print
34 x 22.5 (13 3/8 x 8 7/8)
Brooklyn Museum of Art Collection

• This lyrical scene shows the appropriation of a military space by Edo's mercantile element. The Hatsune riding grounds were once a place used for the practice of horsemanship by the shogun's retainers, but by the late Edo period the location had fallen into disuse — a sad reminder of the redundancy and inutility of the military class. After equestrian drills were discontinued there, neighboring dyers found the grounds a convenient open space to plant stakes from which to dry their cloth.

By now viewers should be familiar with Andō Hiroshige's beloved device of showing small, distant forms beyond magnified forms in the foreground. More unusual, however, are the special textural effects unique to the woodblock medium: the perfectly placed heart of the woodblock just off center in the sky between the willows, and the blind printing of the paper with an impression taken from a piece of silk, seen in the white strip of cloth. The budding willows set the season as early spring, and the peaceful, crepuscular mood of evening is enhanced by the men, women, and children going about their business or gossiping; a group of puppies echoes this last activity.

The artist signed this series of prints "Ichiryūsai Hiroshige." MT

146
Andō Hiroshige (1797 – 1858)
Plum Garden at Kameido, from
One Hundred Famous Views of Edo

1856
Color woodblock print
34 x 22.5 (13 3/8 x 8 7/8)
Brooklyn Museum of Art Collection

• One Hundred Famous Views of Edo is Hiroshige's composite, subjective portrait of a great city. Completed in 1856, just two years before the artist died, this monumental work was reissued many times with modifications. It features near views and far, lofty personages and commoners, traditional scenes and innovative ones — its complexity defies easy characterization. Perhaps inspired by Katsushika Hokusai's One Hundred Views of Fuji, Hiroshige set himself a challenge and rose to it unflinchingly.

Famous views of Edo first appeared on large-scale screen paintings as adaptations of the sixteenth-century screens showing the traditional sights of Kyoto. When the Tokugawa established the "Eastern Capital," they purposely copied many of Kyoto's major landmarks in the new city to lend it dignity and authority befitting the shogunal seat. Printed guidebooks further established the canon of innumerable famous places, or meisho.

Trees have been designated meisho throughout Japanese history — one thinks immediately of the Karasaki Pine, which Hiroshige depicted in his Eight Views of Ōmi — but rarely has there been a portrait of such an uncommon botanical specimen. In a peculiar growth pattern, the branches of the Sleeping Dragon Plum grew downward and rerooted themselves, propagating over an area some fifty feet square. Hiroshige has rendered the apparently timeless tree as an enormous foreground form, while, appropriately, those viewing the blossoms — mere humans who come and go — are tiny background figures. MT

147
Andō Hiroshige (1797 – 1858)
Fireworks over Ryōgoku Bridge, from
One Hundred Famous Views of Edo

1856
Color woodblock print
34 x 22.5 (13 3/8 x 8 7/8)
Brooklyn Museum of Art Collection

Illustrated page 266

• Famous bridges, a traditional theme in Japanese art, are believed to possess powerful liminal, poetic, and strategic properties. And riverboat entertainment on a muggy summer's night was popular all over Asia. The two themes converge here in what was a common summer sight in nineteenth-century Edo: lavish fireworks displays, which were thought to make one feel cool (in fact, a thriving fireworks industry sprang up in Edo). We can practically hear the raucous music coming from the entertainment boats, the laughter of drunken revelers, the whistle of the ascending rockets — followed by silence and then the boom as they explode.

The Ryōgoku Bridge spanning the Sumida River was one of Edo's most famous and frequently depicted bridges. Kitagawa Utamaro (1753 – 1806), for example, loved to portray beauties lined up on its graceful spans. But to render the complicated visual phenomenon of fireworks flashing in a night sky required a conceptual leap. Artists before Hiroshige, namely Yosa Buson (1716 – 1783), had experimented with the effects of reflected light in a night scene. What Hiroshige endeavored to make here — a permanent record of a fleeting pyrotechnic experience — is very much in keeping with the Edo spirit of empiricism, the desire to capture on paper transitory effects that can be but momentarily perceived by the eye. Other printmakers had tried it before, but none achieved the success of the present print. MT



145



146

148
Andō Hiroshige (1797 – 1858)
Moon Pine at Ueno, from One Hundred
Famous Views of Edo

1856
Color woodblock print
34 x 22.5 (13 3/8 x 8 7/8)
Brooklyn Museum of Art Collection

• It is difficult to believe that the site in this print, number 89 in the series, is the same one depicted in Odano Naotake’s *Shinobazu Pond* (cat. 188). The Benten Shrine in the middle of the lake is just visible in the lower right. Both pictures owe a good deal to western influence, seen here in the enlarging of the foreground element, but the resemblance stops there. Whereas Naotake’s view is “cool,” Hiroshige’s is “warm,” presenting a tender portrait of a beloved sight. Like the Sleeping Dragon Plum at Kameido, the Moon Pine at Ueno was a botanical anomaly. As is clear from the illustration, one branch of the tree grew in a complete circle. Within the circle Hiroshige has wittily included the central of the three fire towers on the horizon.

From prehistoric times the Japanese have considered unusual-shaped objects to be set apart from the mundane; they were often thought to be the haunts of native spirits (kami). This helps to explain the popularity of pines — symbols of longevity — as meisho. Hiroshige portrayed four of Edo’s famous pines in this series: the Armor Hanging Pine at Hakkeizaka (number 26), the Pine of Success at Oumabayashi (61), the venerable propped-up sole survivor of the Five Pines at Onagi (97), and the Rope Hanging Pine at Senzoku Pond (110). MT

149
Andō Hiroshige (1797 – 1858)
Sudden Shower over Ōhashi Bridge, from
One Hundred Famous Views of Edo

1856
Color woodblock print
33.7 x 22.2 (13 1/4 x 8 3/4)
Brooklyn Museum of Art Collection

• We can almost hear the crack of thunder as the roiling black clouds burst into sheets of heavy rain, scattering the huddled shapes on the bridge below. On the blue gray expanse of the Sumida River a solitary boatman poles his log raft downstream, undeterred by the storm. This is a *yūdachi* (an evening descent of the thunder god, as one etymology has it), a summer rain in which the heavens suddenly darken late in the day, releasing torrents of rain in large drops, and then quickly clear.

This print is the undisputed masterpiece of the series. It bears comparison in its universal appeal with another of Hiroshige’s most famous landscapes, “Shōno,” from The Fifty-three Stations of the Tōkaidō, with which it shares the theme of escape from a sudden rain. Together with the view of the Kameido plum tree (cat. 146), it was also accorded the honor of being copied by Van Gogh.

The immediate appeal of this dramatic composition is enhanced by finely wrought details. The irregular pattern of the black clouds above reveals to a rare degree the spontaneous hand of the printer, differing visibly from one print to another. The torrent of rain turns out on close inspection to be an overlay of black on gray at slightly different angles, some lines broken, others extending the length of the composition. The seven figures on the bridge offer a lively diversity of ways to escape from the rain, in ones, twos, and threes, under hats, mats, and umbrellas, in one direction and another.

Although the particular place is relatively unimportant to the appeal of this print, it is, as usual, a very specific site, looking northeast over Shin-Ōhashi, or New Great Bridge — named on its completion in 1693 with reference to the existing Ōhashi (later Ryōgoku Bridge) to the north. Atake was an informal place name for the area shown on the far bank, which was named after a gigantic shogun ship, the 1,500-ton *Atake-maru*, which was moored in front of the shogunal boathouses here from the 1630s until it was dismantled in 1682. The boathouses themselves remained, barely visible here to the far left. HDS

150
Andō Hiroshige (1797 – 1858)
Scattered Pines, Tone River, from
One Hundred Famous Views of Edo

1856
Color woodblock print
34 x 22.5 (13 3/8 x 8 7/8)
Brooklyn Museum of Art Collection

• The outstretched form of the fisherman’s net at the right side of this print evokes the swishing sound of the net’s being cast out over the Tone River. The stubby lead weights around the edge create an attractive border to the intricate web within, a tour de force of carving technique. Through the net we see a blurred continuation of the distant shore. Hiroshige may have taken this idea from Hokusai’s *Fuji behind a Net* in One Hundred Views of Mount Fuji, but the effect here is more subtle, the execution more delicate. An added bonus is the fabric printing on the sail in the center.

The scattered pines (*barabara-matsu*) mentioned in the title may be seen on the distant shore to the left. The caption to a similar view by Hiroshige in *Souvenirs of Edo* (vol. I) explains that the pine trees here were worn and twisted by the wind, forming a pleasing natural view. The same caption notes that the place was popular among fisherman for its carp.

The place depicted here is a matter of debate. “Barabara-matsu” sounds like a proper name, and indeed such a place is recorded in various Edo gazetteers. The problem is that the location is always given as the Naka River, whereas in Hiroshige’s day the Tone River normally referred to what is now the Edo River, the major southern channel of the same Tone River whose main course flows into the Pacific at Chōshi. It is possible that Hiroshige was using “Tone River” in the title in a broad enough sense to include the Nakagawa channel, but there is little evidence for such a usage in the late Edo period.

It seems more likely that Barabara-matsu referred to more than one place; perhaps it was even used in a generic sense to designate various groups of scattered pines along the riverbanks in this region. The Nakagawa location does not seem to appear in any gazetteer later than *Edo sōganoko shinzō taizen* of 1751 nor in any guidebook of Hiroshige’s time, though a verse by Ōta Nampo (1749–1823) does specify Nakagawa. In the absence of better evidence, however, it seems best to accept Hiroshige’s Tone River as somewhere on the lower reaches of the present Edo River. HDS

151
Andō Hiroshige (1797–1858)
Kinryūzan Temple, Asakusa, from
One Hundred Famous Views of Edo

1856
Color woodblock print
34 x 22.5 (13 ³/₈ x 8 ⁷/₈)
Brooklyn Museum of Art Collection

- The color scheme of this bright print is red on white (*kōhaku*), which is reserved for propitious occasions. The snow immediately signals the season as winter and is represented with particular skill: above, individual snowflakes drift down through the gray sky, while below, on the roof of the distant temple gate and on the ground leading to it, the fallen snow is suggested by texture alone, through a pattern of small embossed dots (*karazuri*).

The scene is the entrance to Asakusa Kannon, the oldest and most venerable Buddhist temple in the city. Formally known as Kinryūzan Sensōji, Asakusa Kannon is far older than Edo itself. The temple history dates its origins to the year 628, when two brothers (or three, depending on the version) discovered a tiny gold image of Kannon in their net while fishing on the Sumida River. The image was enshrined here, and over the centuries the temple became the object of a widespread popular following that remains strong today.

In the distance is the great Niōmon, or Gate of the Two Kings, named after the huge guardian deities housed on either side. To the right is a five-story pagoda. Framing the view is the famous Thunder Gate (*Kaminarimon*), of which we see the threshold stone below (set off by a faint blue gradation), a huge lantern above, and a slice of the gate itself to the left. Also at the left are two stakes of a green railing, above which is a finely carved net — doubtless intended to keep out pigeons. The huge lantern hanging

in the center of the gate today bears the name Kaminarimon, but in Hiroshige’s view it is marked *Shinbashi*, the home of its donors, whose individual names are written in a circle around the bottom of the lantern, above the gilt decorations with the Buddhist *manji* mark.

There are people in the picture, but they do not meet our gaze, moving away and clinging to the sides of the path. This enables a sense of recession without relying on the linearity of buildings, and it creates an underlying mood that is restrained, even aloof.

A similar indirection is apparent in the snow-covered trees that obscure two-thirds of the face of the distant gate. This is not Hiroshige’s invention, as one would suspect from the absolutely straight view seen today: a highly accurate army survey map of 1883 shows that there was in fact a curve in the approach to the temple. Hiroshige’s composition, while perhaps exaggerated, faithfully reflects the preference for indirection that was designed into the temple layout from the start. HDS





150



151

152
Andō Hiroshige (1797 – 1858)
Fukagawa Susaki and Jūmantsubo, from
One Hundred Famous Views of Edo

1857
Color woodblock print
34 x 22.5 (13 ³/₈ x 8 ⁷/₈)
Brooklyn Museum of Art Collection

• This dramatic design has consistently been one of the most favored of the entire series, often ranked with the rain at Ōhashi (cat. 149). Its particular appeal lies in the distinction between the powerful embracing form of the foreground eagle, as it prepares to dive for prey, and the desolate waste of the wintry marshes below, extending into the distance to the familiar snow-capped form of Mount Tsukuba. The back of the eagle is printed in glinting mica, and the three visible claws are coated in a shiny gloss (*nikawazuri*), enhancing the contrast with the white background. As in other views without figures, the human presence is still felt — in the roofs at the left, in the poles of the lumberyards beyond, and above all in the lone wooden bucket floating at the edge of the bay, surrounded by the small water birds on which the eagle seems to have its eye.

Fukagawa Susaki was a well-known spit of land along Edo Bay that had the popular Benten shrine at the tip and offered excellent shellfish gathering at low tide in the spring. Hiroshige's first view of Fukagawa Susaki appeared in the *Tōto meisho* (Famous Places of Edo) series of 1831, showing the shrine in snow, looking east to the first sun rising on New Year's Day — a sight for which the place was noted.

The view here is from, not of, Fukagawa Susaki, which was southeast of the Kiba lumberyards. To the northeast lay the Jūmantsubo, a large tract of land reclaimed from the marshes in 1723 – 1726 and named after its approximate area of 100,000 *tsubo* (about eighty acres). At the time of this print it was occupied in part by one of the suburban daimyo estates that were common in this area.

The eagle may represent the deity worshipped at the Washi Daimyōjin Shrine, site of the popular Torinomachi Festival. This connection, whether intended by Hiroshige or not, is certainly plausible: the festival occurred in the winter and was linked with prayers for a prosperous new year, a theme that relates to Fukagawa Susaki as well. Washi Daimyōjin, the eagle god, was also associated with the Bodhisattva Myōken, deification of the Big Dipper, which is perhaps suggested in this northward view. HDS

153
Andō Hiroshige (1797 – 1858)
Dyers' Quarter, Kanda, from
One Hundred Famous Views of Edo

1857
Color woodblock print
34 x 22.5 (13 ³/₈ x 8 ⁷/₈)
Brooklyn Museum of Art Collection

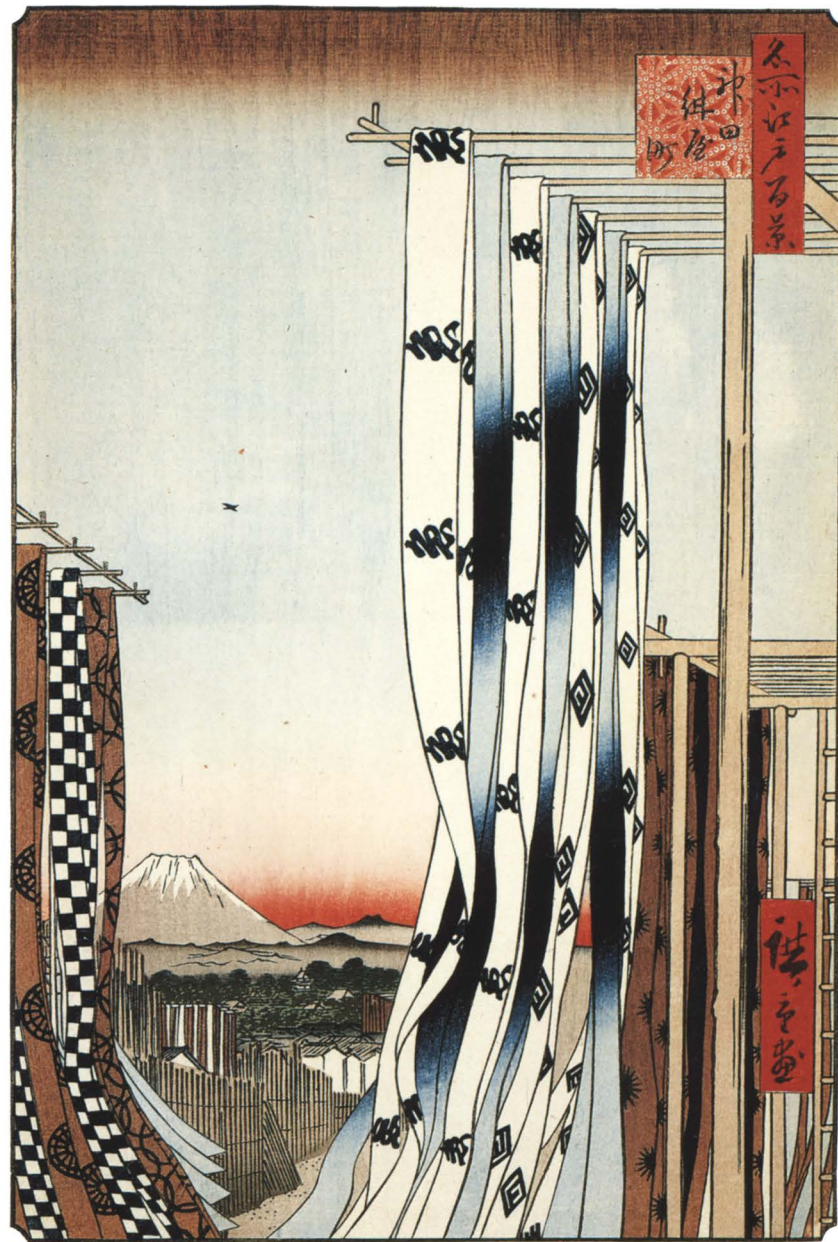
• Stirred by the autumn wind, long strips of freshly dyed cotton fabric hang from drying platforms erected high above dyers' shops in the Kanda district. Hiroshige's vantage point can be gauged quite precisely by observing the relative position between the tall castle tower and Mount Fuji in the distance. This is, appropriately enough, the Fuji-View Tower (Fujimi no Yagura) of Edo Castle.

The fabric with large patterns in brown and indigo was designed for summer or the bath. Primary attention, however, is focused on the fabrics in the center, where every other strip is an exquisitely shaded alternation of blue and white. This fabric was to be made into *tenugui*, cotton strips that were used as towels and headbands and that became a common gift and souvenir item in the Edo period. Great care went into the custom design of *tenugui*. Those in the foreground bear the fish mark of the publisher of the prints, Uoei (see cat. 154), here cleverly written so that it resembles the *hiragana*, pronounced *ue* and hence an abbreviation of Uoei. The strips in the background bear the lozenge-shaped monogram of Hiroshige himself. It is characteristic of the artist's taste and humility that he has placed himself behind his publisher — and that his personal mark appears only this once in the entire series. It is somewhat ironic that the color here is not the traditional indigo of the dyer but the imported Prussian blue of the printer.

Carrying through the theme of dyeing, the actual texture of cloth is conveyed by the careful fabric printing of the white ground on each of the monogrammed strips. As a finishing touch, the title cartouche is finished in an imitation of tie-dyed fabric. HDS



152



153



154
 Andō Hiroshige (1797 – 1858)
Fukagawa Lumberyards, from
One Hundred Famous Views of Edo
 1856
 Color woodblock print
 34 x 22.5 (13³/₈ x 8⁷/₈)
 Brooklyn Museum of Art Collection

• In this, one of several famous snow scenes, Hiroshige offers an evocative view within the lumberyards of the Fukagawa area. It is a compositional tour de force in the intricate balance of interlocked diagonals and vertical accents. The deep blue of the water establishes a zigzag axis, which is echoed by the leaning poles, the near banks, the descending placement of two sparrows, loggers, and puppies. The umbrella at the bottom bears publisher Uoei's fish mark.

The Fukagawa lumberyards were of great economic importance to Edo as a storage site for the huge supply of

lumber needed for repairing and rebuilding the world's largest wooden city. In the wake of a fire in 1641 that destroyed not only houses but the lumber supply itself, the shogunate ordered the yards moved to the Fukagawa district east of the Sumida River. The lumber was stored primarily in ponds, with connecting canals, over total area of some one hundred acres. For transportation to and from the yards, lumber was lashed into rafts and poled by skilled loggers (*kawanami*) — as seen here. HDS



155

Hanegawa Tōei (active last half
of eighteenth century)

Korean Mission

Hanging scroll; ink and color on paper
69.7 x 91.2 (27³/₈ x 35⁷/₈)

Kobe City Museum, Hyōgo

- This unusual cityscape documents an aspect of Tokugawa political life: the congratulatory diplomatic missions sent to Korea or Japan whenever a new Korean king or Japanese shogun assumed office. These large pageants included from three hundred to five hundred people. The first surviving depiction of such a mission dates to shortly after Tokugawa Tsunayoshi's accession in 1680 and was executed

by the ukiyoe artist Hishikawa Moronobu (c. 1618 – 1694); the subject thereafter became a popular spectacle for floating-world artists and fell within the purview of popular, not elite, culture.

According to its box, this scroll shows the tenth mission, which took place in 1748. The Koreans are seen proceeding from their lodgings at Asakusa Honganji toward Edo Castle. The city of Edo was oriented so that certain streets afforded proper prospects of Mount Fuji, and missions were routed down these streets. The theatricality of this scene, therefore, is no accident, and it is enhanced by the newly introduced western technique of single-point perspective; here the buildings create the vanishing point. The national symbol of

Mount Fuji, floating independently above this perspectival scheme, is in counterpoint to the dramatic banner displaying the Korean dragon in the foreground. Both are painted in monochrome, while the colorful throng of spectators contrasts with the sober dignity of the procession.

Of the artist, Hanegawa Tōei, little is known. Also called Tōsui, he is thought to have been a pupil of Hanegawa Chinchō (1679 – 1754). Tōei clearly is indebted to the influence of Okumura Masanobu (1686 – 1764), who is credited with the popularization of vanishing-point perspective about the middle of the eighteenth century. MT

156
Uragami Gyokudō (1745 – 1820)
Frozen Clouds, Sifted Snow

c. 1811 – 1812
Hanging scroll; ink on paper
133.5 x 56.2 (52 1/2 x 22 1/8)
Kawabata Foundation, Kanagawa
National Treasure

Illustrated page 43

• Uragami Gyokudō, a leading figure among the third-generation literati, or bunjin, painters, was born into a samurai family in service to the Ikeda clan of Bizen province (present-day Okayama Prefecture). Given the traditional Confucian education befitting members of his station, Gyokudō studied, in addition to Chinese philosophy, Chinese-style calligraphy, poetry, painting, and music. He was particularly passionate about the seven-stringed Chinese *qin*, the ancestor of the Japanese *koto*, and frequently alluded to his mastery of the instrument in the signatures and seals he used on his paintings. At age forty-nine Gyokudō resigned his official position and spent nearly a decade wandering before he settled in Kyoto in 1811, about the time he painted this scroll.

Perhaps it was this new domestic stability that motivated Gyokudō to create what was to be his most ambitious and moving painting. *Frozen Clouds, Sifted Snow* combines two of the compositional formulas devised by Chinese painters of the Northern Song dynasty (960 – 1127) to encompass a monumental vertical view: “high distance,” which emphasizes

the towering quality of mountains, and “deep distance,” which imparts recession through forms placed at forty-five degree angles to the picture plane. Like such Song paintings, *Frozen Clouds, Sifted Snow* presents an immense slice of nature, moves the viewer by the lyrical evocation of seasonal and spatial grandeur, and reduces the human presence to minuscule figures discernible only after the viewer’s eye has made a complete circuit through the land forms.

Gyokudō’s brushwork runs the gamut from wet to dry, thick ink to pale, and spotted application to fine, pen-like lines. Although his signature, “Gyokudō the qin player, painted when drunk,” and the white seal reading “drunken rustic” may seem to suggest that the artist was intoxicated when he executed the painting, drunkenness is a trope for breaking boundaries. Indeed few paintings in the history of Japanese art display such a perfect dissolution of the division between vision and technique. MT

157
Goshun (Matsumura Gekkei;
1752 – 1811)
Spring Willows and Heron; Mynas in Autumn Foliage

Mid-1780s
Pair of six-panel screens; ink and color on silk
Each 164.8 x 366 (64 7/8 x 144 1/8)
Agency for Cultural Affairs, Tokyo
Important Cultural Property

• One screen by Goshun evokes the calls of myna birds echoing through a scraggly, weed-choked landscape in autumn; the other depicts a powerful heron lifting off from a bunting-filled thicket of spring green willow. The painted subjects seem within easy grasp of the observer. The cropping of landscape elements at the bottom of the picture promotes a sense of connection with the viewer’s space, and the resulting composition is both intimate and atmospheric. The impression of immediacy is enriched by the personalized brushwork, seen especially in the rocks and tree trunks, through which Goshun communicated his temperament and training. These calligraphic aspects, especially notable in texture strokes and dots, were learned by Japanese artists of the Nanga school from Chinese literati painting.

Goshun’s primary teacher during his early career, Yosa Buson (1716 – 1783), was one of the great masters of the second-generation Nanga painters in Japan. Goshun’s work differed from his master’s in its increased naturalism. This may have had bearing on his later decision to change styles and become a colleague of Maruyama Ōkyo (1733 – 1795), a master of the naturalist school of painters in Kyoto.

This pair of screens was rendered in the mid-1780s, a date attested by signature style and by the construction of the composition in large masses, a feature characteristic of that time. HG

吳昌碩



300



Nagasawa Rosetsu (1754–1799)
Mount Fuji and Cranes

Hanging scroll; light color on silk
 157 x 70.5 (61³/₄ x 27³/₄)
 Private Collection, Okayama

• It is difficult to understand how a painter of Nagasawa Rosetsu's eccentricity could have survived in the studio of the sober Maruyama Ōkyo (cat. 190), but Rosetsu thrived. He mastered Ōkyo's realistic manner, but placed it in the service of the surreal, as evidenced in this unique vision of Japan's most famous mountain.

Rosetsu's command of his naturalistic techniques is evident in the strongly plastic modeling of the mountain (especially its summit), and particularly in the masterly blurring of wet ink to suggest swift-moving storm clouds. Yet the oddly oversized cranes, flying in platoon formation, and the perverse elongation of Fuji's contours counter the realism achieved by the brushwork and render the image somewhat unnerving. The combination of the mountain with cranes and rising sun invests the image with overtones of the legendary Chinese Isles of the Immortals, Penglai (Japanese: Hōrai). Thus the painting would have been considered an auspicious image, appropriate for the New Year or other special occasions.

Rosetsu's charmed and highly successful career was brought to a sudden end with his death at age forty-five. It has been suggested that he was poisoned. Something of the eerie quality of his biography is lodged in this picture. MT





159
Cabinet for “*Tale of Genji*,” with design
of Ishiyamadera

1624/1644
Lacquer on wood with makie
25.5 x 28.8 x 40.6 (10 x 11 3/8 x 16)
The Nezu Institute of Fine Arts, Tokyo

• This sumptuous object typifies the high level of luxury attained in the crafts of the Edo period. Elaborately formed from multiple coats of lustrous lacquer applied over a wooden base and adorned with flecks of silver and two contrasting shades of gold (a technique called *makie*), the cabinet was created for a single purpose: to store the fifty-four chapters of the literary classic *Tale of Genji*. On the top and front are depictions of Ishiyamadera, the temple on the shores of Lake Biwa near Kyoto, where Murasaki Shikibu is said to have written the *Tale of Genji* around the turn of the eleventh century. Views of the Seta River flowing from Lake Biwa and the Great Seta Bridge decorate the back and sides of the cabinet. The designers evidently had access to traditional Yamatoe models, for the depiction of Ishiyamadera closely resembles the image created by the court painter Tosa Mitsunobu (1434 – c. 1525) in a

picture scroll commemorating the miraculous legends associated with that temple. Circular crests of the Tokugawa family are distributed throughout the landscape. The detachable front panel is held in place by a folded silver latch representing another family crest. Inside are six drawers in two vertical rows of three, each bearing between seven and ten raised silver chapter titles for tidy storage and easy retrieval of the bound volumes. The two crests indicate that this elegant cabinet may have been in the trousseau of a highly placed bride related to the Tokugawa family. MT

160
Cabinet for “*Tale of Genji*,” with design
of Ishiyamadera

Lacquer on wood with makie
22.1 x 20.3 x 38.5 (8 5/8 x 8 x 15 1/4)
Tokyo National Museum

• Although a somewhat less deluxe production than the previous example (cat. 159), this cabinet testifies to the popularity of lacquer cabinets created to house the *Tale of Genji*. They were part of a genre of beautifully produced containers designed for specific avocational purposes, such as boxes to hold paraphernalia for the incense or

shell games (see cats. 246, 273). As was customary for Genji boxes, the six drawers — two vertical tiers of three — are inscribed with the chapters they were meant to contain. Here the chapter listings on the drawers are more economically painted in gold lacquer rather than executed in raised silver letters (see cat. 159). The design also differs in that the cabinet is formed of two separate boxes hinged together and with a continuous design.

The powdered gold and silver particles are larger in this piece than on the preceding cabinet, imparting a bolder texture and revealing the diversity of technique found in Edo-period lacquer. And while the standard temple and shrine buildings at Ishiyamadera are depicted here as well, the treatment of the rocks as angular, towering forms points to a different — more Chinese — prototype. The absence of family crests suggests that this was not part of a bridal trousseau but was perhaps a ready-made item purchased by a member of the merchant class. MT



160



161
Watanabe Shikō (1683 – 1755)
Mount Yoshino

Early eighteenth century
Pair of six-panel screens;
ink, color, and gold on paper
Each 150 x 362 (59 x 142 1/2)
Private Collection, Kyoto

- The deep mountains of Yoshino, in the southern part of Yamato province, figured in Japanese legend as early as the era of Emperor Jinmu (sixth century BC). Powerful temples such as Kongōbuji oversaw the sanctity of the region, an essential component of the Kumano-Yoshino pilgrimage circuit, which, by the medieval period, was conceptualized as a pair of giant topographical mandala. Rulers like Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536 – 1598), who wished to lay ceremonial claim to the land, led elaborate cherry-viewing processions to Yoshino (and had these events depicted on polychrome screens). Famous poets celebrated Yoshino's exuberant display of cherry blossoms, which were often conflated

with winter snows by the device of “elegant confusion.” A now-lost tenth-century screen on the theme of the Four Seasons bore the following poem by one of Japan's most beloved poets, Ki no Tsurayuki (883 – 946):

When white flakes of snow
flutter thick and fast toward earth,
flowers indeed scatter
before the gale sweeping down
from fair Yoshino's mountains.
(McCullough 1985, 87)

The combination of hills, cherries, and spring mists “spelled” Yoshino to literate viewers. Eleven rolling hill-tops (the central peak shared by both



screens), executed in expensive matte-green mineral pigments (*gunjō* and *byokuroku*), stand for the myriad mountains of this sacred place, while torn bits of reflective gold foil and finely ground particles of gold “sand” suggest its luminous spring mists.

Watanabe Shikō, a well-connected member of Kyoto’s courtier and Confucian circles, experimented with several styles of painting. It is said that he received his initial training in the academic Kano school, which advocated the use of Chinese-style brushwork; he was then attracted to the classical revival mode of Ogata Kōrin (1658–1716). In addition, he reflects the expanding spirit of

empiricism of his day. All of these modes may be seen operating harmoniously in this work: the ink brushstrokes texturizing the trunks of the trees betray Shikō’s Kano training; the puddled ink technique on the hills reveals the influence of Kōrin; and the naturalistic treatment of the blossoms may derive from his interest in contemporary studies of natural history. These screens are thought to date from the period of Shikō’s transition from Kano to Rinpa painting around the beginning of the eighteenth century. MT



162
Watanabe Shikō (1683–1755)
Flowers and Trees of the Four Seasons

Pair of six-panel screens;
ink, color, and gold on paper
Each 155 x 389.5 (61 x 145)
Private Collection, Kanagawa

• This bold yet delicately detailed pair of screens reveals Watanabe Shikō's simultaneous mastery of elegant design — the heritage of his Rinpa training — and the botanical naturalism beginning to awaken during the eighteenth century. Although the theme of *Flowers and Trees of the Four Seasons* might lend itself to hackneyed reproduction after nearly a thousand years of repetition, Shikō's vision is thoroughly fresh and engaging. Playing off against bold, sumptuously textured ground and cloud patterns created from combinations of gold leaf, gold grains, and torn gold and silver flecks, the seasonal flowers progress from right to left across the two screens — wisteria, peony, coxcomb, iris, lily, lespedeza,

pampas grass, and bellflower. The plants are rendered with a compelling delicacy and accuracy of detail, although there are disquieting, perhaps intentional, discrepancies in scale between the huge peony and the diminutive iris. There also exists an innate tension between the naturalism of the floral subjects, whose selection suggests the progression of time, and their juxtaposition in a continuous composition. The operation of time is thus erased entirely, as the flowers and trees enter one seamless, timeless world. MT



163
Ogata Kenzan (1663 – 1743)
The Eight-Fold Bridge

Hanging scroll; ink and light color
on paper
35.6 x 40.6 (14 x 16)
Private Collection, Kyoto
Important Cultural Property

Illustrated page 270

• This simple painting of the irises and bridge theme stretches the definition of “landscape” to the limit. And yet it is one of the most time-honored and deeply beloved subjects in the repertoire of Japanese art, an episode from the tenth-century *Tales of Ise*. The protagonist, tired of wandering and homesick for Kyoto, breaks his journey to take a meal with his entourage; the men sit by a stand of swamp-iris growing in a stream traversed by an eight-plank bridge. Overcome with emotion, they compose a classical poem with five lines, each of which begins with one syllable from the Japanese word for iris, *kakitsubata*. The irises and bridge, then, become the code by which this famous incident is called to mind.

Ogata Kenzan, best known as a potter, made a surprisingly large number of paintings, almost all of them done in his late sixties, when he suddenly moved from Kyoto to Edo. This work betrays the influence of his more famous brother, Ogata Kōrin (1658 – 1716), in its treatment of the theme and use of puddled ink. Kenzan, however, imparts a witty twist by his inclusion of only four planks of the bridge — two of them incomplete — painted with a broad, flat brush in strokes reminiscent of freshly painted boards. Over this he dropped the traditional puddled ink of the Rinpa manner. The empty space is filled, casually but insistently, by three thirty-one-syllable *waka* poems written in Kenzan’s own hand. MT

164
Ike Taiga (1723 – 1776)
Wondrous Scenery of Mutsu

1749
Handscroll; ink and light color
on paper
31.7 x 676.7 (12 1/2 x 266 1/2)
Agency for Cultural Affairs, Tokyo
Important Cultural Property

• Ike Taiga, one of the earliest professional painters to disseminate the Chinese concept of scholar-gentleman’s painting in Japan, rose from humble beginnings to national fame by sheer talent. A prodigy at calligraphy, he encountered Chinese culture as a child. As a teenage artist selling painted fans in Kyoto, he turned to little-known Ming-Qing styles, taken from Chinese woodblock manuals. His work gained acceptance only slowly, but by the time he died, the public’s interest in him extended to his domestic life; legends about his eccentricity abound. Although he employed an inordinate number of styles, his career may be seen as a lifelong quest to infuse his feelings into his painting.

Taiga traveled to the “Deep North” (Dewa and Mutsu provinces) in 1748. He painted *Wondrous Scenery of Mutsu* the following year at the request of a patron in Kanazawa; it is, in a sense, a double “memory-scape” — the impressions of one trip recorded during another. In the colophon, dictated by Taiga and inscribed in the elegant calligraphy of his traveling companion Kō Fuyō (1722 – 1784), the artist revealed his sense of awe at the compelling scenery and his attempts to capture it: “With both thick ink and thin I splashed without inhibition, as my hand led me.”

In actuality, however, *Wondrous Scenery of Mutsu*, structured horizontally along a watercourse, is the result of the careful calculation of contrasts: between massive close-up views and small forms barely visible in the deep distance; between wet ink and dry, light ink and dark; and between the

emphasis on calligraphic line and the spontaneous pleasure of amorphous flung ink, whose texture is enhanced by the hard crust of the nonabsorbent mica with which the paper was treated. The written labels denote objective phenomena, while the impressionistic treatment betrays a wholly subjective interpretation. The light touches of blue are found in traditional painting, but the yellow applied here in an unprecedentedly visual way imparts a fresh impression of sunlight playing over the landscape. MT





165

Ike Taiga (1723–1776)

Mount Fuji

c. 1760

Hanging scroll; ink and light color
on silk65.9 x 97.5 (26 x 38 ³/₈)

Private Collection, Osaka

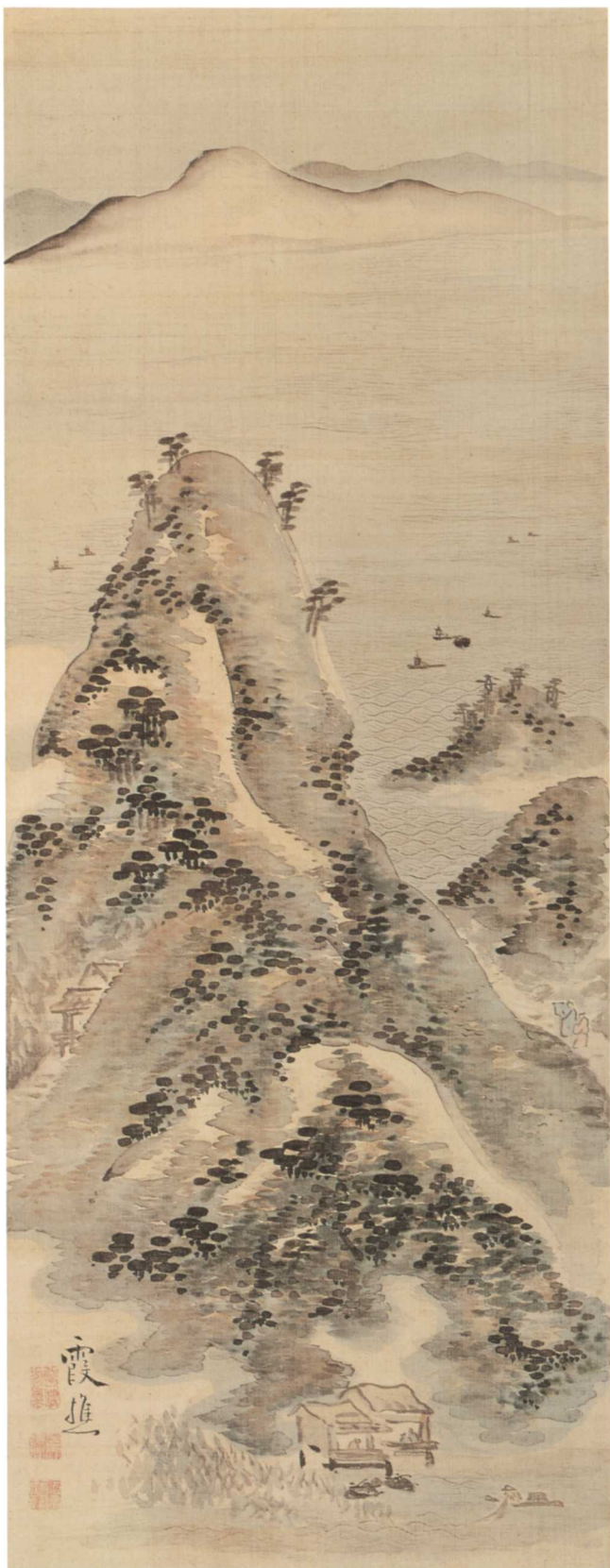
• If the text of his memorial stone is to be believed, Ike Taiga “painted one hundred scenes of Mount Fuji, each one different, and each a place that he himself had seen.” At least fifty paintings of Fuji by Taiga survive, some single paintings and others as parts of sets. He painted the mountain in every conceivable style, including tightly drawn, brightly colored classical Yamatoe; the minimalist, splashy flung-ink manner associated with medieval ink painting; and, in literati fashion, transforming the brush mode of a given venerable predecessor. He even practiced, over and over, trying to capture the form of the mountain in a single brushstroke.

This painting, a product of Taiga’s late thirties or early forties, reveals the artist’s eclecticism as well as his endless inventiveness. One of the tenets of the literati painting movement to which Taiga belonged was to transform the styles of the great masters of the past. Toward this end Taiga called upon that classic Chinese woodblock instructional text, *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual*, for the schema of the so-called raindrop texture strokes “in the manner of” the great Chinese artist Fan Kuan (active c. 990–1030), which Taiga applied with enthusiastic abandon in the foreground. For the texture of the foliage on the distant mountains Taiga employed his favorite massed horizontal dots, which are associated with the literatus Mi Fu (1051–1107; see also cat. 166).

The pronounced fluctuating outline that contours the rocks and especially Mount Fuji, though rendered with a particularly heavy hand here, is also a characteristic of Taiga’s painting, a device to proclaim its roots in the

gentleman’s art of calligraphy. A reminder that Taiga excelled as a calligrapher is seen in the flourish of his signature, “Kashō,” which means “Hazy Woodcutter” and signals the conceit of yearning for nature that was typical of the busy urban “professional literatus” painter.

The composition of the painting is unusual in Taiga’s oeuvre. In the foreground is a Buddhist temple, situated at the shore of a lake or bay which creates a semicircle; it seems that Taiga, too, was bitten by the desire to convey recession by means of the curvilinear forms that mark so many of the other paintings included here, particularly those with western influence. A painting by Taiga almost identical to this one has been published (Taiga 1960, no. 622). MT



166

166

Ike Taiga (1723 – 1776)
True View of Kojima Bay

Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk
99.7 x 37.6 (39 1/4 x 14 3/4)
The Hosomi Art Foundation, Osaka

- Like *Wondrous Scenery of Mutsu* (cat. 164), *True View of Kojima Bay* subjectively commemorates a scene from the artist's travels: a hilly prospect over an inlet in Okayama Prefecture looking across the Inland Sea to the island of Shikoku, visible in the distance. The two travelers on the path, one clad in a pink Chinese robe and the other in a blue one, have been fancifully identified as Taiga and his friend Kan Tenju (d. 1795), with whom he made the trip. Lending credence to the assertion is the fact that the scroll remained in the possession of Tenju's family after his death. It is accompanied by a document from Tenju's cousin and an authentication by Taiga's fifth-generation successor, Taigadō Teiryō (1839 – 1910).

True View of Kojima Bay, painted during Taiga's maturity, shows the artist in full command of his technique. The nonabsorbent silk traps layer upon layer of ink on its surface, the strokes sometimes running together in a blur, sometimes standing out as series of staccato oval dots, sometimes parting to reveal the bare ground of the support. These dots, recalling the manner of the eleventh-century Chinese scholar-painter Mi Fu, invest the painting with the flavor of the antique, as does the composition of distant hills seen over nearer ones. At the same time, the painting would have seemed wholly "modern" to eighteenth-century eyes: the touches of ocher suggesting sunlight and the choppy waves implying wind give *True View of Kojima Bay* the immediacy of a plein-air scene. MT

167

Yosa Buson (1716 – 1783)
Portrait of Bashō

Third quarter of eighteenth century
Hanging scroll; ink and light color on silk
98.2 x 32 (38 5/8 x 12 5/8)
Itsuo Art Museum, Osaka

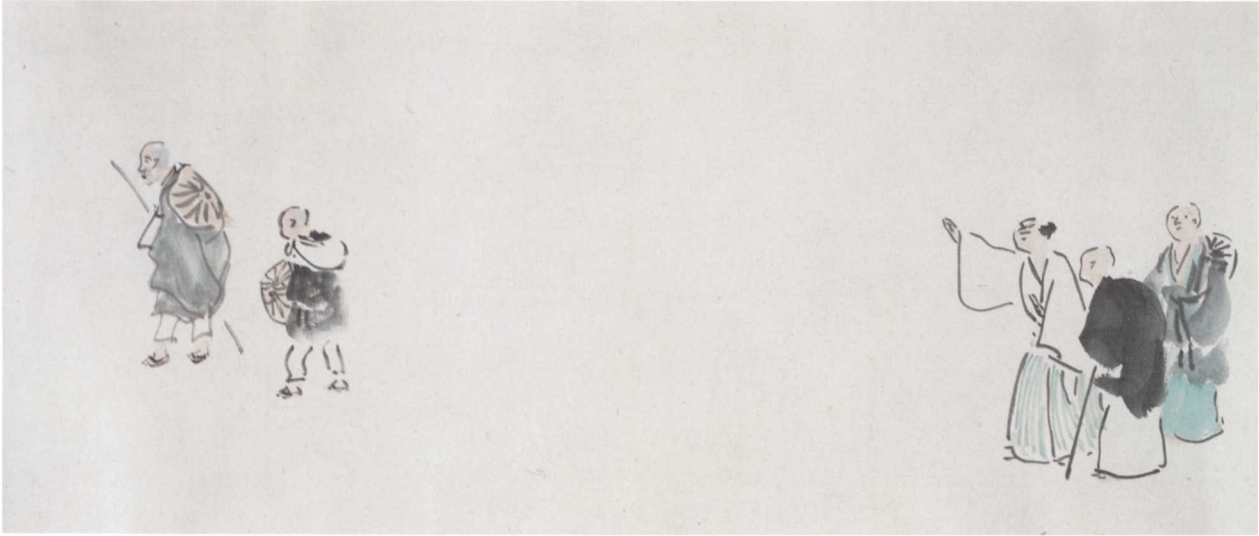
Illustrated page 274

- Yosa Buson painted several portraits of the great haikai master, Matsuo Bashō (1644 – 1694). In this scroll Buson depicts Bashō as an elderly man, even though the poet died at the relatively early age of fifty. The master is shown wearing his characteristic travel hat, a monk's robe, and — a witty touch — a belt bearing tiny banana leaves, for Bashō's name means "banana plant."

To impart an air of dignity to the great poet, Buson depicted him in the manner that he used for Chinese worthies, a style derived from academic painting of the Ming dynasty. The subject is painted so close to the surface that the left side of his body appears to be stepping out of the picture. With its simple, strong outlines, the portrait is simultaneously dignified and dynamic and would have been appropriate for memorial services or ceremonies honoring Bashō. At upper left Buson inscribed a seventeen-syllable poem and preface written by Bashō the year before he died. The poem reads:

Neither speak ill of others,
nor well of yourself.
The moment you open
Your mouth to speak
The autumn wind stirs
And chills your lips.
(Yuasa 1979, 49)

Buson took the name Yahantei in 1770, so the signature Yahantei Buson indicates that this picture dates from after that time. MT



168

Yosa Buson (1716 – 1783)
Narrow Road to the Deep North

Dated 1778

Two handscrolls; ink and light color
 on paper

Each 29 x 711 (11 1/2 x 280)

Kyoto National Museum

Important Cultural Property

• Yosa Buson, one of the pillars of the second-generation literati school, was born into a wealthy farming family near Osaka. By the age of twenty he was drawn to Edo, perhaps to become an actor. He took up Confucian studies and Chinese painting, and began to publish haikai, a seventeen-syllable verse form. Buson was initially attracted to realistic painting styles: he studied the descriptive flower-and-bird images associated with émigré Chinese artists like Shen Nan'pin and the academic approach of the Ming-dynasty Zhe school, in addition to Kano- and Rinpa-school painting. From this unlikely combination of sources, Buson in his later years distilled the nimble, witty manner known today as *haiga* (haiku painting). Buson himself called these paintings *haikai mono* (haiku things). An inveterate wanderer all his life, Buson traveled to the “Deep North” (Dewa and Mutsu provinces) from 1745 to 1747 in order to understand firsthand the epic literary journey of the great poet Matsuo Bashō. In 1751 he settled part-time in Kyoto and began to paint seriously for a living. Buson reached artistic maturity in his fifties. During the last decade of his

life he devoted himself to a Bashō restoration movement, advocating a return to that master's poetic values.

As part of his homage, Buson began in 1777 to make numerous illustrations of Bashō's *Narrow Road to the Deep North*. In none of these images did he reproduce Bashō's entire diary, but he instead selected and essentially re-presented the work, creating something wholly new and unexpected by juxtaposing images from Japanese history with episodes from Bashō's travels. In this two-scroll set, dated 1778 when the artist was sixty-two, he illustrates Bashō's text with a mere thirteen deftly sketched scenes. Scroll one includes Departure, Nasuno, Sukagawa, Iizuka Village, the Jar-Shaped Stone Memorial, Suematsuyama, Shiogama, and the Barrier Gate at Shitomae. Scroll two pictures Natagiri Pass, Sakata, Ichifuri, Betsuri, and Fukui. MT

169

Katsushika Hokusai (1760 – 1849)
Great Wave, from Thirty-six Views
 of Mount Fuji

c. 1830 – 1832

Color woodblock print

26 x 38.4 (10 1/4 x 15 1/8)

Los Angeles County Museum of Art,
 Gift of the Frederick Weisman
 Company

• This famous image exemplifies the fate of the art object in the age of mechanical reproduction: it has become so familiar through appearances on tee shirts, handbags, bookmarks, coffee mugs, and stamps that it is nearly impossible to view with fresh eyes. The dilemma is compounded by the multiple woodblock editions of the print issued during and after Hokusai's time. The image is a victim of its own popularity.

The title of the print, the first in Hokusai's series of Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji, translated literally means “Kanagawa, Underside of a Breaking Wave.” Because the publisher, Eijudō, promised that the series would be embellished with Prussian blue, it is logical that Hokusai would choose a seascape as the major motif of the inaugural print. Throughout his career Hokusai was fascinated with the problem of rendering water. He experimented again and again with aqueous forms, combining movement with abstract stylization.

The design of the *Great Wave* rehearses many of Hokusai's favorite compositional methods: to the lowered western-style horizon he has added another feature from western art, the large object in the foreground that serves as an element of *repoussoir* (see cat. 188). The great swell in the foreground echoes Fuji's triangular shape on the horizon, while the menacing, clawlike spume of the great wave, about to engulf the three hapless fishing boats, forms yet a third, more abstract triangle. Hokusai reminds us here that nature is an active force, and not always benevolent to the world of human beings. MT





170

Yosa Buson (1716-1783)

*Traveler and Horse Passing through
a Spring Landscape (Midday View on a
Spring Embankment)*

Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk
81.7 x 115.3 (32 ¹/₈ x 45 ³/₈)
Kurokawa Ancient Writings Research
Organization, Hyōgo

- On a warm spring afternoon, a traveler leads his bundle-laden horse along a levee that winds its way between irrigated fields and marshland. He has just passed a thatched-roofed farmhouse or country inn, where he may have rested the previous night, before continuing his

journey. Lush, leafy trees line the path in faint pastels, and together with blossoming peach or cherry trees proclaim the arrival of spring. Arching willows in the background on the right echo the soft colors in the foreground and add to the profuse verdure of the scene. The lone rooster in the sunken paddies on the left accents the scene with a touch of bright color.

Yosa Buson truly stands alone among Japanese painters in his gift for capturing the lyricism of a single moment. The fleeting quality of the image serves as his primary expressive vehicle—the traveler will soon disappear from our view. As if to reinforce this temporal aspect, Buson inscribed the title as “Midday View on a Spring Embankment.”

Behind the poetry of this image lies Buson’s skill as a painter. His sure control of varied ink tonalities in the foliage of the trees, the stable composition in which the path curves down toward the viewer and then begins to wend away, and the restrained use of light color washes all enhance the peaceful atmosphere of the picture. We sense the directness and honesty of Buson’s hand; nothing in the image appears distorted or contrived. Signed with the name “Shain,” this image is an example of Buson working in his literati mode and gives us a glimpse of Buson’s interior world in which poetry and painting are harmoniously joined. MM



171

Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849)
Sudden Wind on a Clear Day, from
 Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji

c. 1830–1832

Color woodblock print

Approx. 26 x 38 (10¹/₄ x 15)

Tokyo National Museum

• Katsushika Hokusai's love of truncated triangles, as seen in *Asakusa Honganji* (cat. 172), here finds its purest form in the daringly simple sweep of Mount Fuji's classic outline. It is difficult to believe that this successful design required only four blocks: one for the black, a second for the graded red brown shoulder of the mountain, a third for the unevenly wiped blue sky, and a fourth for the green of the slope. Essential to the aesthetic effect is the grain of the

wood itself, which, along with the visible traces of the inker's hand, imparts a range of textures that vary in each impression.

In the cartouche below the series title Hokusai labeled the print *Gaifu kaisei*, roughly meaning "sudden wind, clear day," although the print is more commonly known by its nickname, "The Red Fuji." The ice-bearing, high-floating cirrus clouds suggest a crisp day in autumn, and during the transition from summer to autumn the mountain could appear this red at dawn. The minimal lingering snow on Fuji's crater is another indicator of the season.

Hokusai must have been especially pleased with this design, because he repeated it almost verbatim for the next print in the series, *White Clouds below the Mountain*. By making only slight changes — narrowing the peak, adding a jagged flash of lightning in the lower right and a barely percep-

tible mountain range on the left, and substituting puffy, low-lying cumulus clouds — Hokusai could suggest Fuji in the thick air of a summer thunderstorm at sunset. The artist might have intended the two prints to represent a contrast of Fuji seen from the south (the present example) with a view from the north (*ura Fuji*).

There are precedents for views of Fuji in the four seasons, and even for one hundred views, but Hokusai was the first to infuse sequences with times of day and weather conditions. He accomplished the effects, miraculously, by making slight modifications to a basic design. In these remarkable prints, Hokusai portrayed the magnificent mountain as a living divinity. MT



172

Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849)
Asakusa Honganji, from Thirty-six
Views of Mount Fuji

c. 1830–1832

Color woodblock print

Approx. 26 x 38 (10¹/₄ x 15)

Tokyo National Museum

- Katsushika Hokusai's seemingly limitless creativity is seen in the novelty of this composition: the pyramidal tip of Asakusa Honganji's gable in the foreground is echoed in the truncated cone of Mount Fuji in the background. Hokusai especially favored this repeating geometry; it is also visible in the complementary cigar shapes of the clouds. In the

middle distance he included a high scaffolding (one of Edo's numerous fire-watch towers) and a kite flapping merrily in the breeze. Hokusai excerpted the juxtaposed tower, kite, and Fuji over rooftops in the later sixty-sixth illustration in his three-volume book *One Hundred Views of Fuji*, but he omitted the large temple in the foreground, changing the focus of the composition entirely. The finger-shaped clouds part to reveal a clutch of tile-roofed houses "below." Not only has the artist played with the vertical-horizontal space in his contrast of up and down but he has caused the same clouds to pass in front of and behind the tower, enfolding it with an impossible depth. Hokusai's ability to harmonize western spatial devices with native Yamatoe stylization (such as the finger-shaped clouds) is a hallmark

of his work, as is the predominance of blue pigment. The placement of a very large object in the foreground is also a characteristic of the western-influenced Akita school. With his usual wit Hokusai has hidden the antlike figures of the five roofers on the massive form of Honganji so that, even though the roof immediately draws the eye, the workmen are the last forms the viewer spots. MT



173



174

173

Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849)
Nihonbashi in Edo, from Thirty-six
 Views of Mount Fuji

c. 1830–1832

Color woodblock print
 Approx. 26 x 38 (10¹/₄ x 15)
 Tokyo National Museum

• The composition of this print by Hokusai bears a striking resemblance to Hanegawa Tōei's *Korean Mission* (cat. 155): both organize the linear recession along two lines of converging buildings while cutting Mount Fuji loose from the perspectival scheme. The similarity is not accidental. It shows the circulation and modification of compositions within the realm of ukiyoe; anything was fair game for an artist as long as an individual spin was put on the rendition. Indeed there are very similar views of the Nihonbashi bridge (from a slightly different angle) and its neighboring rows of fireproof warehouses, plus the shogun's castle in the Chiyoda district and Mount Fuji. In addition to the ubiquitous Fuji — the ostensible “subject” of the series — Hokusai placed the keep and an outer turret of the castle outside the perspectival scheme but almost at center, thus affirming the Tokugawa as above, but central to, the social vision of the city. Below, boats laden with goods from the provinces tie up at the landings, while at the very bottom of the composition throngs of tradespeople jostle each other as they cross the bridge, marked by its distinctive metal-capped railing finials (*giboshi*). A second bridge, Ikkokubashi, is seen in the distance. Hokusai presented the vision of an orderly city, and by extension, an orderly society. MT

174

Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849)
Gotenyama at Shinagawa on the Tōkaidō,
 from Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji

c. 1830–1832

Color woodblock print
 Approx. 26 x 38 (10¹/₄ x 15)
 Tokyo National Museum

• The theme of people picnicking under cherry blossoms is almost a cliché, but Japanese artists managed to bring astonishing variety to this hackneyed subject over the ages. Gotenyama, located in Shinagawa — the first Tōkaidō stop to the southwest of Edo — was famous as a site for cherry-viewing parties, and teahouses catered to this clientele. The trip was just far enough from the city proper to give the feel of an adventure in the country. Because it was thought that Ōta Dōkan, the fifteenth-century founder of Edo, built his castle there (Gotenyama means “palace mountain”), the site also satisfied the need for a famous place to have a recountable history.

Hokusai emphasized the rolling appearance of the area, playing off the rounded forms of the hills against the sudden drop to the rooftops at lower left and against the absolutely flat area in the middle distance. Enormously outsized cherry trees dominate the composition (and dwarf the hillocks); Fuji is visible in the middle of the picture, bisected almost perfectly by the horizon. The mountain is wearing its springtime coat of snow. The artist emphasized the intoxicating quality of the cherry blossoms by having many of the people in the composition appear drunk, exhausted, or, in the case of the children on their parents' backs, asleep. The lively poses of the figures recall the *manga* studies of Hokusai's sketchbooks; possibly they were observed from life. MT



175
Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849)
Nakahara in Sagami Province, from
Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji

c. 1830–1832
Color woodblock print
Approx. 26 x 38 (10¹/₄ x 15)
Tokyo National Museum

- Hokusai depicts Mount Fuji in the background of a rural crossroads in Nakahara (near present-day Hiratsuka). During the Tokugawa period this was a popular destination for pilgrims on their way to the nearby Shugendō temple at Ōyama, considered to be a sacred haunt where Buddhist deities and Shinto gods converged. The Ōyama cult had chapters

throughout eastern Japan. Ōyama was only about eighteen *ri* (Japanese kilometers) from Edo and so was frequently visited by residents of that city.

The nexus of Hokusai's composition is a plank bridge similar in construction to the famous eight-fold bridge with irises depicted by Ogata Kenzan (cat. 163). Crossing the bridge are a peasant woman — hoe in hand, baby on back, and lunch tray on head — followed by a foppish young man and his servant. Below the bridge a fisherman pokes around in his basket. The gaze of a servant bearing boxes slung over a shoulder pole, and the glance of a young man with a pilgrim's staff in his hand, further direct the viewer's attention toward the woman. This line of vision is echoed inten-

tionally by the preternaturally elongated sweep of Fuji to the left. Hokusai clearly enjoyed playing with his triangles, even at the expense of compositional credibility. The ropes leading to the stone monument (seen from the rear) repeat Fuji's conical shape exactly, but stretching out toward the right. Hokusai returns to the triangle again in the lines of the thatch roof at the bottom right, which match both the shape of Fuji and the intersecting angle of the two ropes. MT



176
Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849)
Dawn at Isawa in Kai Province,
from *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*

c. 1830–1832
Color woodblock print
Approx. 26 x 38 (10¹/₄ x 15)
Tokyo National Museum

- The love affair with Mount Fuji begun by Hokusai in the series *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji* culminated in his three-volume monochrome book *One Hundred Views of Fuji*, produced in 1834, about three years after the original set of single-sheet prints. An intermediate phase is represented by this and nine other prints depicting Fuji from the hinterlands (*ura Fuji*, literally “rear Fuji”), added to the *Thirty-six Views* after the supposed completion of the series. It seems

that Hokusai could not stop himself from portraying the mountain. Fuji stood for more than a scenic view to him. Obsessed with the desire for longevity, Hokusai believed that Fuji had talismanic qualities capable of prolonging his life: the pronunciation of “Fuji” resembles that of a pair of Chinese characters meaning “no death.”

The place depicted is the bustling post town of Isawa on the Fuefuki River, at the fork of the two major roads *Kōshū Kaidō* and *Ōsaka Shindō*. Hokusai seems to have been fond of the locality; he had already depicted it in the next-to-last print in the original series. Here he imbued the scene with the lyrical quality that Andō Hiroshige (1797–1858) would exploit so successfully slightly later. It is daybreak, and travelers are staggering sleepily out of the night, their forms barely visible in the shadows of the road. The tilted angles of their hats

eloquently betray their groggy reluctance to engage the day. Hokusai has cleverly shown the sunlight striking Fuji in the dawn sky and illuminating the thatched roofs on the far side of the street; those on the near side, as well as the road itself, are still cast in shadow. Despite the palpable sense of an observed scene, it has been suggested that Fuji cannot be seen from this location because it is hidden by the intervening hills. MT



177
Katsushika Hokusai (1760 – 1849)
Amida Waterfall on the Kiso Highway,
from *A Tour of Waterfalls in Various Provinces*

c. 1833 – 1834
Color woodblock print
37.5 x 24.8 (14 ³/₄ x 9 ³/₄)
Private Collection, California

178
Katsushika Hokusai (1760 – 1849)
Kirifuri Waterfall at Mount Kurokami in Shimotsuke Province, from *A Tour of Waterfalls in Various Provinces*

c. 1833 – 1834
Color woodblock print
38 x 25.8 (15 x 10 ¹/₈)
Private Collection, California

• In each of the prints from this series a famous Japanese waterfall serves as the protagonist in a dramatic interplay of nature's grandeur and the quotidian realm of mortals. Moreover, as in the evocative rendering of a stream with carp and turtles from 1810 – 1820 (cat. 197) or in the dynamic drama of the *Great Wave* (cat. 169) from the early 1830s—just a few years before the waterfall series was undertaken—Hokusai proves himself to be the consummate portrait-er of water. Through abstracting the natural essence of surging water, the artist conveys its physical, spiritual, and aesthetic potency.

The image of the Amida Waterfall (cat. 177), a scenic spot along the old Kiso Highway in what is now Gifu Prefecture, stands out for its strikingly abstract composition. Its name derives from the appearance of the rounded-out gorge at the head of the waterfall, which is thought to resemble the luminous halo of Amida—the Buddha who presides over the Western Paradise (the Buddhist heaven). Hokusai, giving in to his formalistic propensities, however, has exaggerated the geometry of the actual landscape. The swirling waves within a roundel capture a watery infinity rendered in a magnificent Rinpa graphic mode, allowing pictorial abstraction to aspire to a spiritual plane befitting the traditional connections of the site with Shinto and Buddhist worship. In contrast to the exalted concepts of nature, religion, and art symbolized by the water, Hokusai represents humanity by a diminutive scene of two men and a servant partaking of a modest picnic.

The vertical *ōban* (large sheet) format, used for each of the prints in the series, contributes to the effect of loftiness. Here the artist does not show a full view of the Amida Waterfall, but crops it midway to emphasize its plummeting height, over sixty meters in actuality. The artificially elevated perspective—accentuated by situating the gaze of the spectator even higher than the picnickers atop a precipitous cliff—is a technique that Hokusai often employed to convey the sensation of dizzying altitude.

The image of the Kirifuri Waterfall (cat. 178) shows fingerlike rills of water splashing into a pool below as wayfarers look on. During early modern times pilgrims on foot, making

their way north from Edo to visit Tōshōgū—a shrine in Nikkō dedicated to Tokugawa Ieyasu—would commonly include a side trip to view the Kirifuri Waterfall on nearby Mount Kurokami in Shimotsuke province (present-day Tochigi Prefecture). Considered the most spectacular of the waterfalls in the Nikkō area, streams of water cascade down two main tiers of falls, more than seventy-five meters in height. The Kirifuri Waterfall becomes a pilgrimage spot in its own right during the early summer when the azaleas are in bloom, and Hokusai's iconic image did much to further its popularity as a tourist destination.

The Chinese character on the hat of the man climbing the hill reads *ei*, “eternity,” and that of the man resting at the base of the falls is inscribed with the character *ju*, “long life.” But rather than any auspicious connotation, here it refers to Eijudō, a publishing house headed by Nishimuraya Yohachi. Such advertising plugs for his publishers are common in Hokusai's landscape prints. In contrast to this and other prints in the series, the previous image of the Amida Waterfall, for reasons unclear, was printed without the publisher's or censor's seals. JTC

179
Andō Hiroshige (1797 – 1858)
Dawn in Shinagawa, from Fifty-three
Stations of the Tōkaidō

1833 – 1834
Color woodblock print
Approx. 26 x 38 (10¹/₄ x 15)
Nippon Express Co., Ltd., Tokyo

Illustrated page 272

• Shinagawa was the first station on the Tōkaidō for westbound travelers from Edo and the last stop for people coming from Kyoto. This print depicts what would have been a common sight on the Tōkaidō, a daimyo procession — all clad in smart blue costumes with the customary two swords — performing the obligatory trek from their domains to the shogun’s capital. They move stiffly through the early morning, as rosy streaks of dawn break in the sky. Although Katsushika Hokusai had also treated the subject of early morning departures, no print artist could surpass Hiroshige’s capacity for lyricism. His skill is seen especially in the expressive poses of the diminutive figures, from the boldly coquettish teahouse waitress standing by the lanterns left of the procession to the rather shy white-clad figure barely visible in the doorway of the second inn from the left. The anonymous artisan who inked the blocks brilliantly captured the appearance of a dawn sky. The great ships at sea remind us that the name Shinagawa means “Goods River” — products from all over the land entered Edo there. Also famous for its cherry blossoms, Shinagawa thrived as a place for people to see friends off on their westward journey from Edo. MT

180
Andō Hiroshige (1797 – 1858)
Kawasaki, from Fifty-three Stations
of the Tōkaidō

1833 – 1834
Color woodblock print
Approx. 26 x 38 (10¹/₄ x 15)
Nippon Express Co., Ltd., Tokyo

• The third print in Hiroshige’s Tōkaidō series shows the Rokugō ferry, which crosses the Tama River at Kawasaki, a sight the artist depicted a number of times. The view is across the Tama River to the west, leading the eye with a great semicircular sweep along the path of the ferry heading toward the left, then back to the right through the picturesque thatch roofs of the village of Kawasaki (now an extension of Tokyo’s urban sprawl), and on toward Mount Fuji on the horizon. Hiroshige has dwelt with loving detail on the scene, investing it with his usual anecdotal warmth. The ferry is laden with a low-ranking samurai, his women, and some tradesmen, one strapping the load to his shoulder-pole in preparation to disembark. On the far shore a more diverse group, consisting of a rich person in a palanquin, his squatting, seminaked bearer, his well-dressed retinue, and a packhorse laden with enormous barrels, waits to board for the return trip. Visible in the background is the ticket office, where yet another customer puts in for passage; a solitary log-poler pushes off from shore. Crossing cost ten coppers for all but samurai, who traveled free of charge. Sheaves of dried rice straw to the right mark the season as autumn, adding to the lyrical quality of the print. MT

181
Andō Hiroshige (1797 – 1858)
Teahouse at Mariko, from
Fifty-three Stations of the Tōkaidō

1833 – 1834
Color woodblock print
Approx. 26 x 38 (10¹/₄ x 15)
Nippon Express Co., Ltd., Tokyo

• One of the prominent aspects of Edo-period travel was the opportunity to sample the country’s astonishing diversity of local products. Nearly every region had its distinctive specialty or “famous product” (*meibutsu*). Mariko’s specialty, *tororojiru*, is usually translated as “yam soup,” but *tororo*, a marvelous seasonal delicacy, is a white potato that when grated raw and added to broth is incomparably subtle, satisfying, and nourishing. In addition to its gustatory reputation, the station at Mariko possessed literary distinction: it was immortalized by the poet Matsuo Bashō: “Young leaves of plum / And at the Mariko way station / A broth of *tororojiru*.”

Influenced by Bashō’s poem, Hiroshige incorporated the motif of plum, which he showed as blossoming, thus setting the season as early spring. To this mood he added another note of lyricism, that magical, liminal time before sunset, suggested by the peach-colored glow in the sky. The print extends to the viewer a powerful invitation to empathize with all of the characters in the scene, from the satisfied traveler resuming his journey, to the two hungry diners, to the rustic serving woman, a child on her back, who represents stability in the transitory world of the traveler. MT



180



181



182



183

182
Andō Hiroshige (1797 – 1858)
Goyu, from Fifty-three Stations of
the Tōkaidō

1833 – 1834
Color woodblock print
Approx. 26 x 38 (10¹/₄ x 15)
Nippon Express Co., Ltd., Tokyo

• Like *Teahouse at Mariko* (cat. 181), this print shows an evening scene, but the mood is quite different. While samurai were accorded deferential treatment when they stopped for a night's lodging, commoners were occasionally met with a directness bordering on ferocity. Keen competition for travelers' business led to a no-holds-barred approach, from sleeve grabbing to a stranglehold. Seldom in Japanese art (or any art) has such a range of facial expressions been presented: the agonized grimace of the man being choked, the bovine determination of his assailant, the satisfied malevolence of the ring-leader, and finally, the resigned boredom of the woman watching from the window, who probably witnesses similar scenes every evening. The guest soaking his feet inside politely averts his eyes. The names of the artist, publisher, carver, designer, and printer are cleverly included in the advertised fare of the inn, providing rare documentation of otherwise little-known participants in print-making. MT

183
Andō Hiroshige (1797 – 1858)
Kanaya, from Fifty-three Stations
of the Tōkaidō

1833 – 1834
Color woodblock print
Approx. 26 x 38 (10¹/₄ x 15)
Nippon Express Co., Ltd., Tokyo

• The enormous volume of traffic during the Edo period produced what amounted to a virtual mobility industry, which included such workers as packhorsemen, bearers, ferrymen, and porters. And because the Tokugawa regime restricted the movement of potentially hostile armies by not building bridges over major rivers, this workforce was joined by a host of seminaked specialists in river fording. The lack of bridges was inconvenient to say the least; during the rainy season travelers could be stranded for almost a month waiting to cross. Shallow rivers could be traversed on foot without assistance, but deeper ones, like the Ōi River pictured here, required other means. The price of carriage depended on the depth of the water and the mode of transport: palanquin, litter, or shoulders (the first two are pictured here). Sometimes the price was renegotiated midstream, when the consumer had little say in the matter. In this print the palanquin bearers moving into the deep water to the left extend their right hands to synchronize their stride, while those at the extreme right negotiate with a group ready to cross. To emphasize the width of the riverbed, Hiroshige rendered the mountains in the background as being much taller than they are in reality. MT

184
Andō Hiroshige (1797 – 1858)
Spring Rain at Tsuchiyama, from
Fifty-three Stations of the Tōkaidō

1833 – 1834
Color woodblock print
approx. 26 x 38 (10¹/₄ x 15)
Nippon Express Co., Ltd., Tokyo

Illustrated page 273

• Perhaps because Hiroshige was born to a samurai family, he shows a particular sensitivity in portraying the warrior class. Of the several daimyo processions he depicted in Fifty-three Stations of the Tōkaidō this one is perhaps the most sympathetic: green-and rust-clad warriors, heads bowed in the bone-chilling downpour, slowly make their way across a bridge into Tsuchiyama, a spot so notorious for its rains that sometimes the post houses were washed away. Samurai had to comport themselves with dignity despite personal discomfort, in contrast to the commoners Hiroshige shows in other prints (cat. 149), who allow themselves the luxury of fleeing from the rain. The rushing river looks ready to take its toll, and the ominous cracks in the plaster of the dwellings do not augur well for a pleasant night's stay. The composition of this print is unique, consisting almost wholly of truncated forms. Unusual, too, is the technique of shading in the trees, which suggests the influence of Shijō-school painting. The dark, claustrophobic feeling contrasts with the spaciousness of *Kanaya* (cat. 183) and the peaceful, crepuscular mood of *Teahouse at Mariko* (cat. 181). Hiroshige's manipulation of the landscapes' emotional expression in this series undoubtedly helped launch him from obscurity into fame. MT



185

Tani Bunchō (1763 – 1840)

Traveling by Boat in Kumano

Two handscrolls; ink and color on silk

Height 38.2 (15)

Yamagata Museum of Art

- Tani Bunchō seems to have lived a charmed life as a well-placed son in an upper-class samurai family in Edo. His training in painting encompassed virtually all of the styles popular in his day, and from these he devised a range of expressions from abstract flung-ink landscapes to uncannily realistic portraits showing extreme western influence. In addition to being a prolific painter, Bunchō taught a remarkable number of pupils — purportedly more than one thousand. He wrote treatises on painting as well.

A trusted intimate of chief councilor Matsudaira Sadanobu (1758 – 1829), Bunchō accompanied him on an inspection tour of coastal defenses to prepare for a possible attack from the Russians. Such was Bunchō's capacity for realism that he provided Sadanobu with sketches of the area for defense.



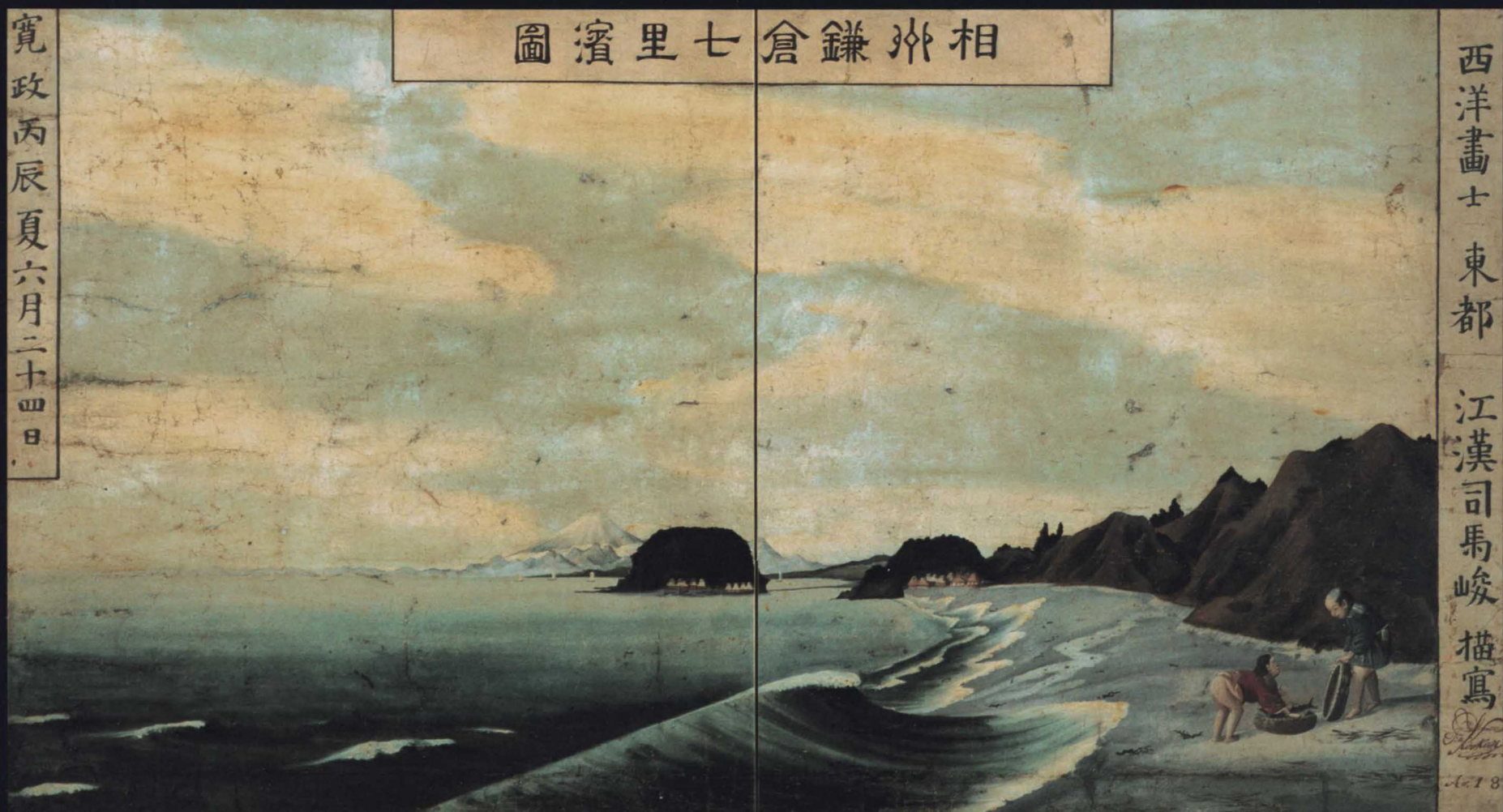
Traveling by Boat in Kumano shows Bunchō's supreme mastery of his métier. Its delicate brushwork in the so-called blue-and-green manner gently defines the unique rock formations and colorful villages with a pleasing lyricism. Bunchō may have visited the Kumano region when he went to Nagasaki to study painting in his youth. One of Japan's holiest sites, Kumano was home to three great shrines and the famed Nachi Water-

fall; in addition to being a major site of the Shugendō mountain cult, it was considered the earthly manifestation of the Pure Land of Amida (Sanskrit: Amitabha) Buddha. Bunchō's rendition of Kumano, furnished with labels that recall the mapping tradition, has the air of a picturesque tourist spot rather than a site of pilgrimage and salvation. MT

西洋畫士 東都 江漢司馬峻 描寫

相州鎌倉七里濱圖

寬政丙辰夏六月二十四日



18

186

Shiba Kōkan (1747 – 1818)

The Seven-League Beach

1796

Two-panel screen; oil on paper

95.6 x 178.5 (37⁵/₈ x 70¹/₄)

Kobe City Museum, Hyōgo

Important Cultural Property

• Shiba Kōkan stands out for his eccentricity among even the most unconventional artists of the Edo period, in part because he was also a prolific writer who dwelt long and lovingly on his own accomplishments. A resident of Edo, he began his career forging ukiyoe prints of beautiful women in the manner of Suzuki Harunobu (1724 – 1770). Insatiably curious, Kōkan studied Kano painting, then the vivid, neoacademic Song style of the so-called Nagasaki school. He subsequently found his passion in the extreme (to Japanese eyes) realism of western painting and prints. In his indefatigable pursuit of the new, he tutored himself in the western technique of copperplate engraving learned from Dutch books; he experimented with viscous binding agents to impart to Japanese pigments the opacity of the unfamiliar oil paint — earning his work the epithet “mud pictures” from his contemporaries. His studies extended to western science; he was friendly with a number of the leading Japanese scholars of Dutch studies. He wrote and illustrated treatises on astronomy and made the five-hundred-kilometer journey to Nagasaki — on foot — to gain knowledge firsthand from the Dutch at Deshima.

The Seven-League Beach was a famous site in Kamakura. Kōkan donated his painting, as he did other pictures, to the Atagoyama Shrine in Edo, where it served as both a votive picture and an advertisement for his talents. It is an image of a Japanese famous place (meishoe) executed in the western manner. Using opaque matte colors, a lowered horizon, illusionistic space, forms modeled in chiaroscuro rather than limned delicately with traditional brush lines, and white clouds floating in a blue sky, Kōkan attempted to capture the scene as he imagined a European painter might have represented it. A proud flourish in roman letters accompanies his signature in Japanese. Although the composition was later copied and popularized by Hiroshige, the priests of the Atagoyama Shrine evidently worried that the western qualities of the painting might offend the Japanese gods, thus linking style and nationalism. They had the painting removed from the shrine in 1811. MT

187

Odano Naotake (1749 – 1780)

Scenes of Japan

Two hanging scrolls; ink and color on silk

Each 119.8 x 43.4 (47¹/₄ x 17¹/₈)

Shōgenji, Mie

Illustrated page 278

• In trying to conceive of landscape as he imagined western practitioners would, Naotake stripped these scenes of the traditional Japanese conventions that had informed paintings of famous places for a millennium. He did away with allusions to the literary, historical, or religious associations of the locality; stock combinations of set motifs (such as irises and bridge) that lend clues to the identity of the locale; and conspicuous identifying

artificial or topographical features.

The bridge in the middle distance of the left scroll may be Kintaibashi (Brocade Bridge) in Iwakuni, a technological marvel because of its long, arched spans. The precipice on the right might represent the dreaded cliffs of Oyashirazu, literally “Not knowing your parents,” a site on the Japan Sea so named because at high tide travelers had to run between waves or be dashed to pieces on the rocks. The name implied that those in danger would abandon the Confucian value of putting their parents’ safety before their own physical well-being. By sacrificing the conventions of depicting famous places for a more “objective” view, Naotake rendered the locality of his landscapes ambiguous.

Instead of working within established landscape tradition, Naotake focused on displaying his mastery of western conventions, such as the extremely low horizon (the sky occupies approximately five-sixths of the composition in both pictures), the consistent recession into depth, the large elements in the foreground that push the middle-ground forms deeper into space, the pronounced atmospheric perspective and unified light source, the direct observation of the water’s action, and the conspicuously western models for the trees. Absent is any sense of the artist’s own feelings toward the scenery. In their place is the neutral reportage that the Japanese associated with western landscapes. MT



188

Odano Naotake (1749–1780)

Shinobazu Pond

Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk

97.5 x 132.5 (38³/₈ x 52¹/₈)

Akita Museum of Modern Art

Important Cultural Property

• This unique painting merges rampant eclecticism in an unexpectedly harmonious vision. An enormous urn of pink and white peonies, a smaller but equally colorful flowerpot behind it, and a portion of a tree trunk — all rendered with almost photographic clarity and careful attention to a unified light source in the western manner — serve as agents of *repoussoir* against an East Asian ink-and-wash backdrop. The view is of Edo's famous Shinobazu Pond and its cele-

brated Benten Shrine, approached by a bridge from the right. Puffy white clouds (of unpainted silk) scud in the blue sky, and the silhouetted forms cast carefully observed mirror images into the reflective lake. Although hybrid in style, the picture was executed in traditional materials. This site in the heart of the world's largest metropolis was (and still is) a popular area for taking the air and seeing the sights. Here it is eerily denatured, silent, static, and rarefied in a manner typical of Akita-school painting.

Odano Naotake, whose father was a retainer of the daimyo of Akita in northern Japan, was tutored in the cultural pursuits usual for a young samurai: Confucian studies and painting. But because the Akita area was a center for investigations of western science known as Dutch studies, Naotake also learned about western techniques of mining and

painting. The Akita daimyo Satake Shozan (1748–1785) strongly promoted such studies and was a creditable painter himself. Naotake became friends with the western-influenced Renaissance man Hiraga Gennai (1726–1779) who was invited to Akita to supervise mining. When Naotake was later sent to learn metallurgy in Edo, he stayed in Gennai's lodgings in the capital. Unfortunately, as so often happened in a society subscribing to the system of collective responsibility, Gennai became embroiled in a scandal, was imprisoned, and died shortly thereafter. Naotake was among those taken down with Gennai: he was stripped of his position, recalled to Akita in disgrace, and dispossessed. All this seems to have been so devastating that he died soon afterward, his brilliant career cut short at the age of thirty-one. MT



189

Maruyama Ōshin (1790–1838)
Lake Biwa

Dated 1824

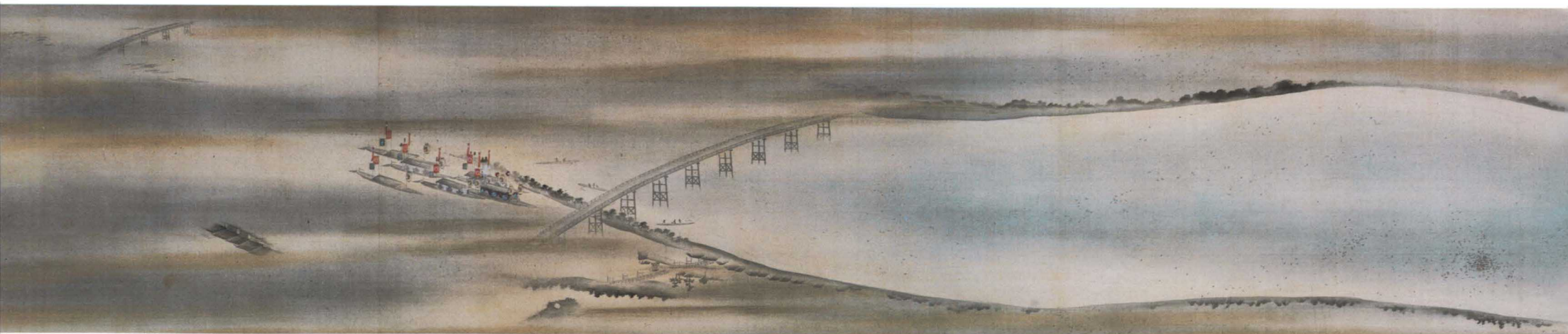
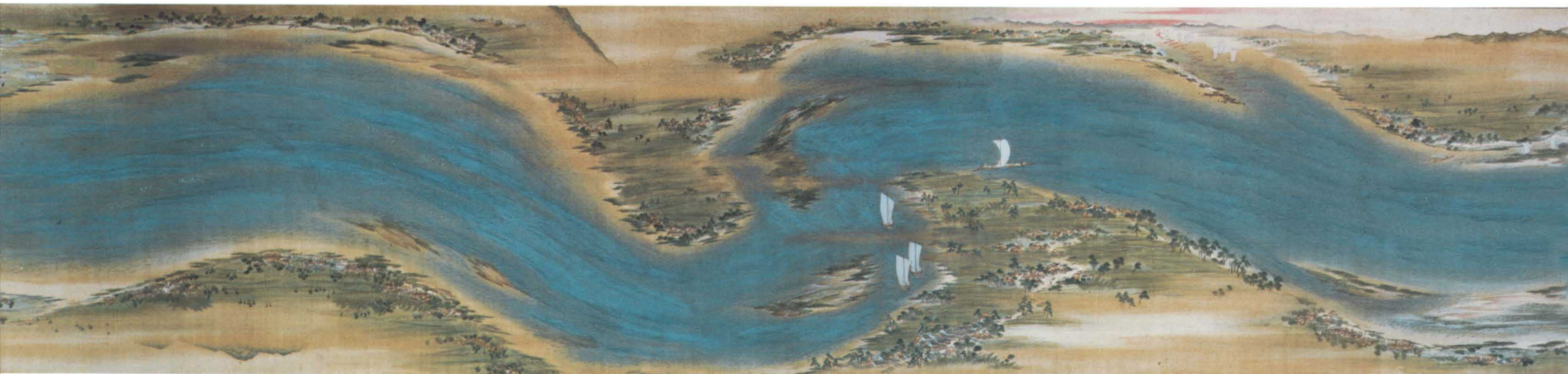
Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk
57.5 x 146.6 (22 ⁵/₈ x 57 ³/₄)
The Museum of Shiga Prefecture,
Biwako-Bunkakan

- Lake Biwa has been shown as part of the Eight Views of Ōmi Province in traditional painting since at least the Muromachi period (1392–1573). Under this Chinese-style rubric, painters conflated familiar stock poetic motifs such as Evening Bell from a Distant Temple or Geese Alighting on a Sandbar with traditional scenes such as Ishiyamadera, Miidera, the

Karasaki Pine, or the Great Seta Bridge. The purpose of such paintings was literary and evocative rather than objective and visual.

Maruyama Ōshin, the adopted son of Maruyama Ōkyo's successor, became the third head of the Maruyama line. He learned the master's lessons well, as shown by a comparison of this painting with Ōkyo's *Both Banks of the Yodo River* (cat. 190). Both embellish huge panoramas with tiny forms, eradicate the literary element, use washes of gold for mists, devote an audacious amount of space to the watery element, and model the mountains in such a way as to suggest the fall of light. The pronounced curvature of this composition was perhaps designed to demonstrate the artist's knowledge that the earth is round. If the famous sights of Lake Biwa are

depicted at all, they are so minute as to blend in unobtrusively with the total view. Ōshin rather astonishingly chose to include a depiction of a Korean mission in the scene. The last Korean mission passed through the area in 1764, sixty years earlier, so Ōshin must have depended on sketch-models in Ōkyo's studio for his rendition. Perhaps the sixty-year interval (the length of a calendrical cycle) is significant, and this is a commemorative depiction of the event. MT



190
Maruyama Ōkyo (1733–1795)
Both Banks of the Yodo River
1765
Handscroll; ink and color on silk
40.2 x 1690.5 (15⁷/₈ x 665¹/₂)
The Arc-en-Ciel Foundation, Tokyo

• Maruyama Ōkyo's penchant for panoramas and cityscapes may have resulted from his early employment as a colorist in the establishment of the Kyoto toy-shop proprietor Nakajima Kanbei. The young Ōkyo's duties included creating "perspective pictures" for Kanbei's "Dutch glasses," wildly popular peep-show paraphernalia imported from Europe through the Chinese city of Suzhou and sometimes accompanied by depictions of that city drawn with western spatial

conventions. Ōkyo's surpassing skill in synthesizing elements of western, Kano, and Rinpa painting — he was an admirer of the versatile Watanabe Shikō (cats. 161, 162) — earned him high acclaim and a host of followers in the late nineteenth century. His combination of life drawing and established sketch-models formed the basis of the enduring Nihonga movement that still flourishes today.



Both Banks of the Yodo River must surely delineate one of the largest slices of topography ever presented in a single continuous composition: the scroll begins in Kyoto and ends in Osaka. Ōkyo's careful, consistent manipulation of space, chiaroscuro modeling of the mountains, and attention to minute detail prefigure his large cityscapes such as the *Bird's-Eye View of Kyoto*, and were passed on to his followers. The

peculiar convention of the scenery on the near shore being depicted upside down hails from the mapping tradition; here the artist tried to show each bank as it would be seen from the opposite shore. *Both Banks of the Yodo River* is thus an idiosyncratic combination of the conceptual and the perceptual. MT

Nature: Catalogue 191 – 209

191
Sakai Hōitsu (1761 – 1828)
Kosode with blossoming plum tree

Early nineteenth century
Hand-painted ink and pigment
on silk satin
157.8 x 116.4 (62 1/8 x 45 7/8)
National Museum of Japanese History,
Chiba, Nomura Collection

• Sakai Hōitsu, the second son of the daimyo of Himeji-han, was born in Edo and studied in Kyoto with Kano, Maruyama, and literati painters. He spent the last two decades of his life in seclusion, painting and studying the life and works of Ogata Kōrin (1658 – 1716).

Hōitsu’s revival of Kōrin’s decorative style can be seen in this beautifully painted kosode, probably inspired by Kōrin’s (see cat. 29). By dripping ink onto a still-wet painted surface, Hōitsu gave a three-dimensional effect to the trunk and branches of the plum tree. Although the subject matter and techniques of this kosode are consistent with Rinpa paintings, it appears that Hōitsu was very conscious of how this composition would look draped on a human body. When the robe was worn, the trunk of the tree would rise up the body of the wearer and branch out along the arms. By placing the plum tree on the left side and having it curve to the right, the artist departed from most late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century kosode designs, including those with dyed and embroidered standing tree motifs. Such designs are usually concentrated on the right half of the garment.

Hōitsu was known for his paintings of flowering plants, and he used pigments to depict the plum tree’s blossoms and the dandelions and violets portrayed at the hem of the kosode. A hand-painted artist’s seal on the right overlap gusset completes this beautiful work of art. SST

192
Uragami Gyokudō (1745 – 1820)
Reading the “Book of Changes” in the Cloudy Mountains

Hanging scroll; ink on paper
168.1 x 92.4 (66 1/8 x 36 3/8)
Okayama Prefectural Museum of Art

• Gyokudō’s landscapes use a narrow repertoire of forms, some conventional and others unique to the artist. The steeply humped mountains are common in Chinese painting, but the thrusting, phallus-shaped plateaus and curious circular areas of untouched white paper are Gyokudō’s own. The range of his brushstrokes includes horizontal oval or elongated vertical marks for the trees, scribbly parallel lines for the outline and texture of the mountains, and a scratchy, searching kind of stroke for various forms. The originality of his work lies in his novel combinations of these elements as well as in the explosive energy of his application of ink — from the bristly, dry, thin strokes that define the skeleton of the landscape to the lush, black, velvety blobs that flesh it out.

This elaborate landscape, filling the space with aggressive forms that erupt upward, reveals the artist’s episodic working process of superimposing layer upon layer of increasingly dense ink, chosen in some places seemingly by whim or instinct. Gyokudō’s way of life may have some-

thing to do with his creative methods. Contemporaries report that he rose early, drank a few cups of sake, then napped at noon. Never “finished” or “unfinished,” his paintings oscillate between pure gesture and pure form. Although quintessential literati ink plays, Gyokudō’s works rarely appear playful; most display an uncanny brooding energy somehow indicative of his alienation from his society.

Gyokudō was a devoted sinophile, and his work reveals a familiarity with techniques of Chinese painting learned from originals. The title of this painting, written in his distinctive archaic Chinese clerical script, also shows his fascination with ancient Chinese culture. He mentions reading the *Book of Changes* (*Yi Jing*), from the pre-Confucian Chinese body of learning known as the “Four Books and Five Classics,” while enjoying the majesty of nature in another painting title as well. Perhaps this was one of the artist’s own favorite activities. MT







193

Katabira with garden landscape

Mid-eighteenth / early nineteenth century

Paste-resist and indigo dyeing, silk and metallic thread embroidery, and pigment on plain-weave ramie

174 x 124 (68½ x 48⅞)

National Museum of Japanese History, Chiba, Nomura Collection

• Stylized landscape patterns called *goshodoki* (literally “imperial court style”) are typical of *katabira* such as this (see also cat. 203). These designs often incorporate allusions to classical courtly literature or *nō* drama and flowers of the four seasons.

The *goshodoki* design on this summer robe includes miscanthus, plum blossoms, bush clover, chrysanthemums, Chinese bellflowers, rocks, streams, and willows surrounding brushwood fences and gates. The lower gate is

shown open, possibly indicating the presence of an unseen person in the garden. Blue and pale yellow cloud forms filled with pine needles, plum blossoms, and ginkgo, ivy, and maple leaves anchor the composition. The blue cloud forms also resemble pools of water. The crescent moon of embroidered gold on the upper right sleeve suggests twilight, reinforcing the sense of coolness created by the crisp white ramie cloth, the blue color scheme, and the water imagery. SST



194

194
Itō Jakuchū (1716 – 1800)
Tree and Fowl

Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk
135 x 67.5 (53 ¹/₈ x 26 ⁵/₈)
Private Collection, Osaka

- In this painting a brightly plumed rooster struts past a hen that seems to lower its head demurely. Pairs of birds perch in the branches of a tree above, and a type of magnolia (*shidekobushi*) blooms in the lower right corner.

This work shares a nearly identical composition with two other paintings by Jakuchū (Sannomaru Museum of the Imperial Collections; and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Shin'enkan Collection). Similarities in the placement and dramatic pose of the domineering rooster, with its flamboyant neck and tail plumes, paired with a cowering hen suggest the use of a common model for all three paintings. Yet in the other two works Jakuchū replaced the tree with a hydrangea to create a denser, more colorful picture surface, particularly in the Sannomaru painting, which belongs to Jakuchū's thirty-scroll masterpiece, the *Colorful Realm of Living Beings*. In the version seen here, the rooster's pose is not quite as streamlined, and, pushed to the left edge, he must share the stage with the other elements of the composition. The rooster lacks the tense vitality of the other versions, while the hen turns toward him somewhat awkwardly. A more thorough study is needed, but *Tree and Fowl* appears to share marked stylistic affinities with such Nagasaki-school works as Kumashiro Yūhi's *Flowers and Birds* screens (Tokugawa Museum). It is provisionally suggested that the present work is an early composition that Jakuchū reworked later in his career, after achieving a more mature artistry. MM



195

195

Itō Jakuchū (1716 – 1800)

*Rooster, Bamboo, and Chrysanthemums
in Snow*

1740 – 1750

Hanging scroll; ink and color on paper

114.2 x 61.9 (45 x 24 ³/₈)

The Hosomi Art Foundation, Osaka

- Chickens were one of Itō Jakuchū's favorite subjects. Here a lone rooster leans forward as if to peck for insects through the heavy mantle of snow that covers the ground. The chrysanthemums and bamboo that frame the rooster are coated with wet snow, the weight of which bends and twists the bamboo stalks, making a confusing tangle. Snow-covered blades of grass and occasional breaks in the snow add to the frostbound atmosphere. As in many of his paintings, Jakuchū takes the ordinary and transforms it into an unexpected vision.

This image might be interpreted metaphorically, with the rooster being a symbol of the Five Virtues according to Chinese lore. The rooster would stand for the superior man—accomplished in literature, possessing virtue, courage, a martial spirit, and loyalty—who is able to survive the cold winters of life. Because chrysanthemum and bamboo also symbolize the virtuous gentleman, their inclusion in the painting could not have been merely arbitrary.

Jakuchū inherited a successful green-grocery in Kyoto, and his painstakingly detailed paintings of fowl and other subjects reflect this immediate environment. They also suggest influences from European optics available through the Dutch trade and indirectly through commerce with China, as well as the paintings of the Chinese émigré Shen Nan'pin and the Nagasaki school. MM



196
Itō Jakuchū (1716–1800)
Stone Lanterns

Pair of six-panel screens; ink and
gold on paper
Each 159.1 x 360.8 (62⁵/₈ x 142)
Agency for Cultural Affairs, Tokyo

• These screens are unique in Jakuchū's oeuvre and confront the viewer with something other than the thematic and sensual immediacy of the artist's better-known flower-and-bird paintings (see cats. 194, 195). Abandoning his characteristically colorful palette for sober black and gray ink tonalities, Jakuchū here presents ten stone lanterns that apparently line a fenced wooded path. Across a void obscured by mists of gold wash, a line of gently sloping low mountains stretches wavelike across the entire background. Compositionally, the two screens seem to respond to each another: an outstretched pine

tree "anchors" the right side of the right screen, while the fence's low-pitched diagonal establishes visual weight in the left screen. This contraposing of right and left halves of the painting reinforces the sense of space in the middleground and endows the image with compositional stability.

The subject of the painting is an enigma. Is this simply an image of lanterns, a play of varied ink tonalities, or is there more significance? Stone lanterns such as these line



the paths through Buddhist temples, a world to which Jakuchū turned late in his life. And Jakuchū seems to have favored monochrome in his paintings of Buddhist subjects, such as the *Vegetable parinirvana* (cat. 121). That work as well as the rough-hewn stone Buddhas that Jakuchū designed for Sekihōji, the temple near which he retired, may provide a clue to the meaning of this painting of lanterns. As with both of the other subjects, the painter here has endowed the lanterns with an almost human expression. Each is individualized—given its own “face” in effect. With different shapes and sizes, the lanterns seem

to have their own personalities. Yet in their ghostly quiet they also recall the sense of imminent death in Jakuchū’s paintings of withered lotuses and a skull and bones, both of which he painted after the Great Tenmei Fire devastated Kyoto in 1788.

This pair of screens recently resurfaced after having been lost since World War II. MM



197

Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849)

Carp and Turtles

Dated 1813

Hanging scroll; ink and color on paper

27.6 x 92.4 (10⁷/₈ x 36³/₈)

Saitama Prefectural Museum

• Hokusai is best remembered as a print designer and book illustrator, but he was a painter of no mean talent as well. This rather large painting of a pair of carp and two turtles swimming amid waterweeds amply demonstrates his mastery of the brush. Apart from the light green pigments used for the vegetation and the eyes of the fish, the painting is rendered entirely in ink.

The distinctive use of shading conveyed by variations in ink tone lends a high degree of three-dimensionality to the fish and creates a convincing suggestion of flowing water. While deftly capturing the vitality of the fish and turtles, the artist has also endowed the carp with a quasi-human expression. Hokusai often rendered eyes of animals with this uncanny effect, by which he seems to infuse the scene with his own subjectivity—his twist on the East Asian aesthetic

goal of nonduality of subject and object. In its realistic depiction of fish and turtles this painting reveals the artist working within the broad tradition of nature studies seen in the work of the Maruyama-Shijō school. Maruyama Ōkyo (1733–1795) and Nagasawa Rosetsu (1754–1799), for instance, created a number of paintings on the theme of aquatic animals.

The painting bears an inscription dated 1813 in which Hokusai states he is bequeathing his “Kimō dasoku” seal to one of his pupils, who remains unnamed. Since Katsushika Hokumei (active 1804–1830), a female pupil of Hokusai’s, is known to have used this seal around 1810–1820, it is assumed that the inscription was addressed to her. JTC

198

Maruyama Ōkyo (1733–1795)

Rabbits and Horsetail

Dated 1786

Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk

104.5 x 42 (41¹/₈ x 16¹/₂)

Shizuoka Prefectural Museum of Art

• Maruyama Ōkyo, who painted for Kyoto's urbane merchant class as well as for the imperial court, offered his clients a fresh alternative to the often static pictorial formulas manufactured by the dominant Kano school. Ōkyo trained under a Kano artist but went on to develop his own style based on direct observation rather than painting manuals or other pictures. He has been called Japan's first true "realist" painter.

The rabbits and tokusa grass, or horsetail, in this hanging scroll seem to have been glimpsed in their natural habitat, attesting to the acuity of the artist's eye. The timid crouch of the rabbits, their proportions and coloring, and the details of their eyes and fur demonstrate a thorough study of their anatomy and behavior. Set against the background of the vertical grass, the animals are shown from three distinct angles—profile, frontal, and back views—as seen in many of Ōkyo's sketches from nature.

Rabbits were a popular motif in the Edo period and frequently show up in paintings as well as in designs for porcelains, samurai helmets, netsuke, and kimono. The rabbit-and-horsetail motif itself seems to have been a favored combination, appearing often on eighteenth-century men's and women's clothing, for example. The tokusa carries associations with the nō play *Tokusa*, a moving story of the reunion of a son with his father. Representations of the play often include a full moon, perhaps indicated in Ōkyo's painting by the rabbits, which are traditional symbols of moonlight in Japan. Despite his reputation for being a painter chiefly concerned with naturalistic representation, Ōkyo may be making a subtle literary allusion in this painting. MM



198





199
Sakai Hōitsu (1761 – 1828)
Maple Trees in Spring and Autumn

Dated 1818
Pair of six-panel screens; ink, color,
and gold on paper
Each 163 x 366.4 (64 ¹/₈ x 144 ¹/₄)
Private Collection, Osaka

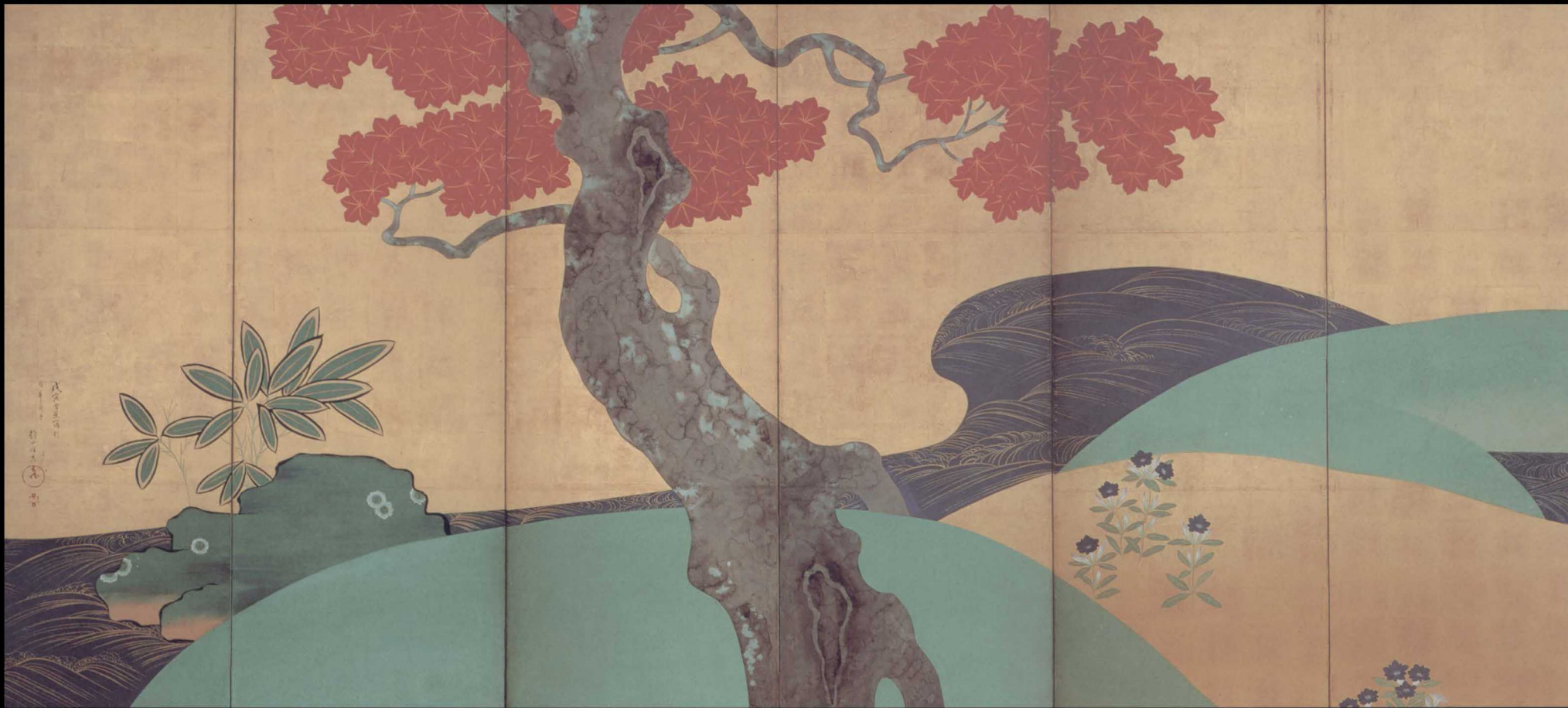
- Maple trees of spring and autumn are contrasted in this bold composition by Sakai Hōitsu, one of the first practitioners of “Edo Rinpa” painting. Brilliant green and scarlet leaves with veins etched in stars of gold pigment show Japanese maples in their most vivid colors. The patterned clusters of leaves and snaking lines of the trunks are dramatically silhouetted against the shimmering flat background of gold leaf. A swiftly flowing brook rippled in gold adds a sense of movement to the scene. Tiny violets in the spring screen (right) and blue bell-flowers in the autumn screen (left) also indicate the seasons. The continuous space formed across the screens by the bank and water contradicts the temporal difference.

Opposing large motifs on the folding screens was a well-established convention by Hōitsu’s time, and a significant part of his oeuvre follows this format (see cat. 204). Perhaps no Rinpa artist mastered this compositional formula more successfully than Ogata Kōrin, whose *Red and White Plums* are the paradigm of visual play

between the two halves of paired screens. Hōitsu assiduously studied Kōrin’s painting and in 1815 published a print of a pair of screens of maple trees having the same composition as the present one. Hōitsu’s painting should thus be considered a copy of a lost earlier work by Kōrin. Without this original, it is difficult to determine where Hōitsu’s copying ended and his own invention began. But the composition closely follows that of the printed illustration of Kōrin’s painting, whereas the style of painting seems to owe more to Hōitsu’s hand.

Hōitsu’s signature and seals appear on the outer edges of both screens, and there is an additional inscription on the autumn screen dating the painting to 1818. MM

199 (detail)







200



201

200

Mori Sosen (1747 – 1821)

*Monkeys in a Persimmon Tree*Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk
127 x 54 (50 x 21¹/₄)

Tōyama Memorial Museum, Saitama

201

Mori Sosen (1747 – 1821)

*Monkeys by a Waterfall*Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk
127 x 54 (50 x 21¹/₄)

Tōyama Memorial Museum, Saitama

• The native macaque has been a favored theme in Japanese art since its appearance on tomb sculpture in the protohistoric period. In addition to being one of the twelve Chinese zodiacal animals, monkeys were venerated as Shinto tutelary deities (see cat. 136) and as traditional protectors of horses. Wild monkey tribes were distributed from Kyushu to northern Honshu.

No Japanese artist, it would seem, was as devoted to monkeys as was Mori Sosen. Not only were they the most frequent single subject in his oeuvre, Sosen went as far as to substitute one of the characters in his name, the so meaning “ancestor,” with another so, which means “monkey.” He even, it is said, claimed the monkey as his ancestor, which is surprising because he was born in the year of the rabbit. Sosen, who began his training under a Kano-school master, turned to the realistic manner of Maruyama Ōkyo, most likely in order to portray his simian subjects all the more vividly.

It is said that he captured monkeys so that he could paint them from life, and indeed he has “captured” the macaque’s characteristic amber fur and the scarlet skin around the animal’s callous buttock pads with a degree of verisimilitude that is almost disconcerting.

Sosen’s paintings almost invariably focus on the familial nature of monkey groups. In *Monkeys in a Persimmon Tree* he depicts a mother macaque, baby clinging to her breast, stretching upward for some bright ripe persimmons, while the stately pater familias sedately savors the fruits of her labors below. In *Monkeys by a Waterfall*, Sosen presents two monkeys next to a waterfall in the characteristic pose of grooming each other. The delicacy of the animals’ fur, and the abbreviated but naturalistic handling of the landscape elements — particularly the inky treatment of the rocks and trees and the green moss dots — point to the artist’s knowledge of Nagasaki-school painting. MT

202

Yosa Buson (1716 – 1783)

Landscape

Dated 1764

Pair of six-panel screens; ink and light color on silk

Each 176.5 x 378 (69¹/₂ x 148⁷/₈)

Idemitsu Museum of Arts, Tokyo

Important Cultural Property

• Now considered one of Japan’s greatest literati painters, Yosa Buson was better known and more highly regarded in the Edo period as a poet. He appears to have taught himself painting, and he worked in a variety of styles and formats available to the mid-eighteenth-century artist. The present pair of landscape screens is in Buson’s literati style, a self-consciously free and highly calligraphic

manner cultivated by the scholar-gentleman of the period. It is classified as such primarily because of the Chinese landscape setting of lofty peaks, the overall subdued tonality, and the diversity of expressive brush-stroke types. Moreover, it is signed “Sha Chōin,” the artist name he used in his literati mode.

In the spirit of the Chinese literati masters, Buson employed his own impressive arsenal of brushstrokes to describe varieties of foliage, to texture land forms in dry markings, and to convey atmospheric effects of mist and light. We are presented here with a vision of a landscape of sweeping grandeur, where space is communicated through a combination of diminishing scale, steadily receding diagonal shorelines, and swaths of mist that obscure the silhouettes of distant peaks in ink washes. Only a few figures appear in rustic hermitages or elsewhere in the landscape. The image resonates with the literati ideal of solitary retirement in a breathtaking natural environment.

The colophon states that the artist created the work in his “Blue Cloud Cavern” studio in 1763, during what was a highly productive decade for him. MM





203
Katabira with rustic pavilions and seasonal plants

Second half of eighteenth century
Paste-resist and indigo dyeing, silk
and metallic thread embroidery, and
pigment on plain-weave ramie
167 x 127.4 (65³/₄ x 50¹/₈)
National Museum of Japanese History,
Chiba, Nomura Collection

• This katabira made of fine ramie cloth is decorated primarily by an exacting paste-resist and indigo dyeing technique called *chayazome* (see also cat. 193). A starch-paste resist was applied to both sides of the fabric, leaving only lines and small areas of design to receive the blue color when the cloth was submerged in an indigo dye vat. The different shades of blue, a characteristic feature of *chayazome* katabira, were obtained by exposing certain areas of the fabric to a greater number of immersions in the dye. Lighter blue areas were covered with resist after preliminary coloring and before the cloth was dipped in the dye again. After the desired tones of darkest blue were attained, the cloth was hung to dry, then rinsed in water to remove the paste. It has been suggested that this technique was the invention of a seventeenth-century Kyoto textile merchant named Chaya Shirōjirō, but there is no substantial evidence to corroborate this claim.

Chayazome katabira were worn primarily, if not exclusively, by women of the highest levels of the samurai class. These expensive formal summer garments were typically decorated with stylized landscapes. The landscape on this example includes clusters of thatch-roof pavilions with brushwood fences, gates, bridges, rocks, drying fishnets, and water. A profusion of plants and flowers of



the four seasons are rendered in blue and white with occasional touches of colorful silk or gold thread embroidery. Included are late winter plum blossoms; early spring cherry blossoms; summer irises, peonies, and narcissus; and autumn chrysanthemums, bellflowers, bush clover, and maple leaves. Yellow gold pigment highlights some of the pine, iris, and rock motifs. Fine blue lines and dots were probably drawn with an indigo pigment crayon. With its apparent disregard for perspective and many elements grossly out of proportion, this composition of a fantasy landscape is nevertheless very charming. SST

204

Sakai Hōitsu (1761 – 1828)
*Flowers and Grasses of Summer
 and Autumn*

After 1821

Pair of two-panel screens; ink, color,
 gold, and silver on paper
 Each 164 x 182 (64 1/2 x 71 5/8)
 Tokyo National Museum
 Important Cultural Property

- From his birth, Sakai Hōitsu was extremely lucky in two regards. First, he was born into the Sakai clan, lords of the prosperous Himeji-han and fudai-daimyo, who enjoyed an unusually close relationship with the Tokugawa shogunate. Second, as the younger brother of the sixteenth head of the clan, he was unburdened by the responsibilities expected of his older brother, free to lead a leisurely life concerned with the effete pleasures of poetry and other cultural pursuits. During his youth Hōitsu studied various painting styles, trying his hand at the ukiyoe manner of Utagawa Toyoharu and the Ch'ing court painting style of Sō Shiseki. An avid poet, Hōitsu composed comic kyōka verse for an illustrated album by Kitagawa Utamaro. After his brother's early death in 1797, Hōitsu took Buddhist vows and entered a semiretirement of poetry composition and painting.

Hōitsu's personal discovery of the Rinpa painting style is thought to have occurred around 1801 – 1804. It is also during this period that he first used the name “Hōitsu.” After studying the life and works of Kōrin through visits to Kyoto and correspondence with Kōrin's descendants, and later compiling the two-volume *One Hundred Paintings* by Kōrin to commemorate the centenary of Kōrin's death in 1815, Hōitsu devoted the remainder of his own life to cultivating the art of Rinpa in Edo.

Flowers and Grasses of Summer and Autumn juxtaposes rain-soaked summer grasses and flowers with those blown by the autumn wind. In the summer screen (right) arching blades of overgrown eulalia obscure our view of drooping white lilies, while a rivulet caused by a sudden downpour snakes through a swath of azure at the upper right. A vine of morning glories spirals up one stalk of grass, its brilliant pink blossoms faintly echoing the bell-shaped lilies below. In the autumn screen (left), a strong gust of wind scatters the russet ivy leaves, while a long vine of blossoming kudzu is carried off the ground in a graceful arc. Eulalia, now gone to seed, bends to the left with the force of the strong breeze.

These screens are a technical tour de force. Hōitsu has intricately interwoven the curving blades of eulalia to create three-dimensional space out of flat surface pattern. He has brushed the veins of the eulalia, lilies, kudzu, and ivy with slender lines of gold, adding to the stunning delicacy of the painting. The background of silver leaf, now tarnished, gives a sense of dimming evening light in summer and crisp autumn air.

Recognized today as Hōitsu's greatest work, *Flowers and Grasses of Summer and Autumn* was originally painted on the reverse of Ogata Kōrin's *Gods of Wind and Thunder* (cat. 140). The two compositions provide an elegant contrast and a compelling connection. Hōitsu's verdant motifs respond in their cool silver tones to the brilliant gold of Kōrin's paintings and create a calming visual release from Kōrin's energized figures. Their subject matter is also intrinsically connected. As originally mounted, the summer grasses were on the reverse of the thunder god panels, pounded down under the weight of a thundershower. Appropriately depicted on the reverse of the wind god panels, eulalia, ivy, and kudzu dance in the strong gusts of autumn.

The recent discovery of a preparatory painting for *Flowers and Grasses of Summer and Autumn*, now in the Idemitsu Museum of Arts, has shed further light on this remarkable work of art. The preparatory painting is mounted on a pair of folding screens and thus might be more accurately called a cartoon than a sketch, owing to its highly finished quality. On the back an inscription in Hōitsu's hand describes the circumstances of the painting's commission: “Donated according to the request of Lord Hitotsubashi of the First Rank, a preparatory painting for a pair of two-fold screens, with silver ground. From the brush of Kōrin, on the obverse Thunder God, Wind God. On the reverse Summer Grasses in Rain, Autumn Grasses in Wind. Completed and submitted on the ninth day of the eleventh month in the fourth year of Bunsei [1821].”

Lord Hitotsubashi of the First Rank was none other than Tokugawa Harusada, father of the eleventh Tokugawa shogun, Ienari. Harusada celebrated his seventieth birthday in 1820 and was promoted to Junior First Rank in the same year. In 1822 Harusada's granddaughter married Hōitsu's nephew, raising another possibility for the painting's commission. Given the proximity of the date recorded on the preparatory painting, it is thought that *Flowers and Grasses of Summer and Autumn* was created to celebrate one of these auspicious occasions. MM







205

205
Ganku (1749 or 1756 – 1838)
Rooster and Banana

1781
Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk
125.6 x 56.5 (49 1/2 x 22 1/4)
Tōyama Memorial Museum, Saitama

• In this depiction of a colorful rooster pecking at a large grasshopper in the shade of an enormous and somewhat menacing banana plant, Ganku shows off his mastery of broad brushwork combined with fine detail. The banana leaves were painted with a wide, flat brush and no outline—the so-called boneless technique—using monochrome ink and an expensive green pigment, while the veins were rendered skillfully with precise parallel lines using a conventional brush. The feathers of the rooster, exquisitely detailed, form a bold visual contrast with the roughly defined foliage. Ganku claims in the inscription to be following the style of the tenth-century Sichuanese bird-and-flower painter Huang Chuan. But the green moss dots give away his indebtedness to a more recent influence, namely the naturalistic work of the Chinese émigré painter Shen Chuan, who brought the academic styles of the Ming and Qing court to Japan in the 1730s. Ganku painted this work in 1781.

Considerable confusion surrounds Ganku's biography. Born in Kanazawa, he moved to Kyoto sometime around 1780 and entered the service of a court noble. He received a court rank (see cat. 206), but his duties must not have been too arduous, for he seems to have had ample time for painting. He experimented with various realistic modes, including Kano- and Maruyama-school painting, then eventually founded the Ganku school, similar in its poetic naturalism to the Shijō school of his friend Goshun. Ganku was famous above all for his paintings of tigers. MT



206

206
Tanaka Mori...
[signature indecipherable]
Seated Portrait of Ganku

1839
Wood
Height 98 (38⁵/₈)
Shinjō'in, Kyoto

• Ganku's origins are obscure — according to some accounts, he was the son of either a kimono maker or a retainer of a daimyo in the Hoku-riku region — yet his career attests to an upward mobility clearly at odds with the Tokugawa conception of the fixed nature of society. This memorial statue, executed in 1839, the year after Ganku died, attests to his final identity as a member of the imperial court. He wears the formal hat and robes that mark that class. At the same time, we know that he was, in effect, a thoroughly professional painter.

Although we know relatively little about the sitter and virtually nothing about the sculptor, by good fortune a painted self-portrait of Ganku also survives. In it he wears court robes and hat, as here, but the painted image presents a very different physiognomy and expression: his forehead is lower, his cheekbones protruding, his mouth petulant, and his intense expression betraying a strong personality. This funerary sculpture, however, represents the idealized realism and mildness of expression appropriate to an image used in memorial rituals for an important person. MT



207

Nagasawa Rosetsu (1754–1799)
*Monkeys by a Cascade and
 Chinese Children at Play*

Early 1780s

Pair of six-panel screens; ink and
 color on paper

Each 165 x 360 (65 x 141³/₄)

Private Collection, Osaka

• Few artists tackled as wide a range of themes as did Nagasawa Rosetsu. In his short career he mastered Chinese and Japanese figures, including children, sages, witches, ghosts, and beauties; real and mythical landscapes; flowers, bamboo, and other plants; and animals of every variety, from dragons and elephants to weasels and frogs. And with his penchant for the unusual, he deployed them in odd combinations: a tiger in waves, an enormous bull with a tiny puppy, flowers and ants.

Here Rosetsu has juxtaposed two popular themes from the Maruyama-Shijō school repertoire. This example of Rosetsu's relatively early style is painted with the flat-brush technique he learned from his teacher, Maruyama Ōkyo, and it employs a fashionable hybrid Edo realism, which mixes western influence with Chinese academic techniques such as the texturizing axe-strokes on the rocks. The faces of the monkeys, however, betray a hypnotic, anthropomorphized expression that is the product of Rosetsu's own wit. Images of groups of Chinese children symbolize fecundity and were often presented to newlyweds in anticipation of producing myriad offspring to ensure the survival of the family name. Yet this eccentric combination of subjects betrays Rosetsu's distinctive sense of humor. Is he likening the nature of children to monkeys taken out of the wild? MT

208

Hayashi Jikkō (1777–1813)
Eels

Hanging scroll; ink on paper

126.6 x 40 (49⁵/₈ x 15³/₄)

Tokyo National Museum

• Hayashi Jikkō (also pronounced Jukkō) lived an ill-fated life and died at age thirty-six. The handful of unassuming paintings he left behind reveals neither an affiliation with any particular school nor a happy personality. They center on slices of zoological life or supernatural imagery—fragmented, monochrome, often infused with a dark humor. His disconcertingly anthropomorphized fauna so closely recall those of Chinese madman-genius Zhu Da (1625–after 1705) that either Jikkō knew Zhu's work directly or the two artists were kindred spirits.

The two eels seen here seem to intertwine as they swim down toward the viewer. With considerable skill the artist achieved this foreshortened effect by varying the amount of ink and by twisting the brush so that different views of the eels are presented simultaneously. The inky mass at the top from which the eels emerge is typical of Jikkō's unrestrained touch, so abstract as often to be unreadable. As pure form, however, this area still shows a careful control of ink tonality, involving the application of dry strokes with a broad brush, over wetter, almost flung, ink. Further confounding the distinction between gesture and image is the artist's signature ("Ten Inlets") at right, which, perhaps purposely, takes on the slithery quality of his subjects.

Japanese eels, which can reach a length of two feet, have been considered a delicacy since the Muromachi period, and they are eaten at the height of summer to fortify the constitution. This painting, therefore, would probably have been displayed in summertime. MT





209
Yosa Buson (1716 – 1783)
Landscape
Dated 1764
Pair of six-panel screens; ink
and light color on satin
Right 144.2 x 319 (56 3/4 x 125 1/2);
left 144.2 x 354 (56 3/4 x 139 3/8)
Kyoto National Museum
Important Art Object

• This pair of screens was probably created as a prize for a lotterylike “screen on the month club.” In 1764, when they were painted, Buson, a late bloomer, was forty-eight years old and just starting to emerge as a major talent, although these works still betray a certain immaturity. He had returned to Kyoto from a peripatetic life, married, settled in a fashionable area, and was the central figure in a group of haikai poets. But he needed money. So he and his disciples hit upon a scheme in order, he claimed, to procure the expensive materials such as the silk with which he wished

to work, calling this painting futures organization the “Screen Society” (Byōbukō).

The earliest of the Screen Society paintings, depicting a herd of horses in the colorful, detailed, mimetic style of the Nagasaki school, dates to 1763. Always practical, Buson must have found the production of such expensive, labor intensive products too burdensome, because by the following year, when this and several other lottery screen paintings were produced (see also cat. 202), he was increas-



ingly working in a more abbreviated literati mode. Traces of Nagasaki-style realism remain in the naturalistic treatment of the bamboo, but it is mitigated by the combination of more schematic methods and motifs from Chinese painting manuals such as the *Mustard Seed Garden of Painting*, used for the trees, rocks, and hills. Buson made optimum use of the luminosity of the satin ground to achieve the atmospheric effect. The screens are suffused with the bucolic poetic sentiment for which he was later to become famous. MT



Play

of every variety blossomed during

**The Human
Figure in the
Playground
of Edo Artistic
Imagination**

JOHN T. CARPENTER

the Edo period, in spite of concerted attempts by the shogunate to control every aspect of people's lives by neighborhood surveillance and by the promulgation of Neo-Confucianism, which stressed the virtues of civic order and material austerity. Spectator sports such as horse racing and sumo wrestling attracted increasing numbers of fans, while businesses catering to leisurely pursuits such as restaurants, theaters, and bordellos flourished in every urban center. Along with the better-known theatrical fare of *nō*, *kyōgen*, and *kabuki*, entertainment provided by professional dancers, puppeteers, acrobats, jugglers, storytellers, and countless other types of performers did much to enliven the daily lives of townspeople. Bordellos, it should be mentioned from the outset, were not merely places for men to purchase sexual satisfaction, though that was undeniably their *raison d'être*, but they became centers of sophisticated cultural life in their own right. By surveying the emergence of various forms of entertainment during the Edo period, especially the activities of theaters and bordellos, this essay investigates the remarkable ways in which Japanese artists conceived of the human figure in paintings and prints.

By the end of the seventeenth century the aesthetic preferences of the townspeople (*chōnin*) living in the major urban centers of Edo, Osaka, and Kyoto had shifted from the landscape and nature subjects admired by courtier and samurai elites to images of the human figure at work and play. A common modern misconception may connect the

popular art of Japanese woodblock prints primarily with the landscapes of Katsushika Hokusai and Utagawa (Andō) Hiroshige, but in fact these are a late phenomena in Edo print culture. Hokusai's Fuji series and Hiroshige's Tōkaidō series represent the print boom of the early 1830s.

Most ukiyoe, or "pictures of the floating world," created by genre artists of the late seventeenth through late nineteenth centuries, dealt with the daily life and amusements of city dwellers and featured courtesan districts and kabuki theater. Since the overwhelming majority of ukiyoe prints portrayed actors or courtesans and their clientele, artists of this school necessarily had to grapple with depictions of the human figure, not a strength of artists from the traditional Kano, Tosa, and Rinpa schools. With a few notable exceptions, the realistic depiction of the human figure has never been the first priority of the Japanese painter or sculptor:

Art is something which lies in the slender margin between the real and the unreal. . . . It is unreal, and yet it is not unreal; it is real, and yet it is not real. Entertainment lies between the two. . . . If one makes an exact copy of a living being, even if it happened to be Yang Kuei-fei [who was renowned for her beauty], one will become disgusted with it. Thus, if when one paints an image or carves it of wood, there are, in the name of artistic license, some stylized parts in a work otherwise resembling the real form; this is, after all, what people love in art. . . . While bearing resemblance to the original, it should have stylization; this makes it art, and is what delights men's minds.¹

As the playwright Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653–1724) suggests in this passage on the mimetic art of puppet drama, perhaps artists' avoidance of realistic representation was intentional. Admittedly, the usual materials and formats of early Japanese pictorial art — paintings or woodblock prints created with water-soluble pigments — did not lend themselves to a strong tradition of verisimilitude, as did oil painting, which is not to say watercolors or woodcuts could not have been used to reach that end (see cat. 77). When western-style chiaroscuro and perspective that can create convincing veristic effects came to be known, they were not embraced (see cat. 186).

A survey of Japanese genre painting and prints indeed reveals that the representation of an individual's expression is rarely a priority. Taken to the extreme, faces become masks without wrinkles or blemishes; bodies become stiff garments with carefully articulated folds but with no sense of an underlying corporeality. Emotions are generic, human shapes stereotyped. We might then ask, at what price did Japanese artists forgo verisimilitude of bodily description, the portrayal of individual character, and psychological profundity — all of which weigh so heavily in our evaluation of premodern European art? They eschewed these qualities to gain the freedom to produce pictures with expressive outlines of calligraphic vigor, dynamic patterning and design, and coloristic brilliance whose power to move viewers remains strong even today.

Yet even if we accept that artists of the ukiyoe tradition, in particular, did not pursue as a primary aesthetic goal the naturalistic representation of the human figure — more specifically, the face — it would be shortsighted to disregard the ingenuity displayed by artists of this school in creating emotionally evocative images of men and women at play. We may conclude that faces function merely as masks conveying generic emotions such as joy, sadness, sexual allure, disinterestedness — the list can be as varied as the range of human emotions. Then these masklike faces are enlivened and transformed by a complex aesthetic syntax of hairstyles, garments, body poses, and symbolic personal accessories or accoutrements of leisure. Needless to say, every tradition of figural representation has its own set of conventions and historically constructed visual vocabulary, but the ukiyoe tradition is distinguished

by the extent to which “body language” — including the sophisticated textile designs of garments and bodily poses — takes priority over facial depiction. Background, too, we discover, dissolves completely. In short, body must be read as face.

To get a better grasp of these complex aesthetic issues, in this essay we shall view works that document the transformation of the human form by mask, makeup, or costume and explore how the artist creatively represents or reinvents the human figure at play. Before turning to works of some of the most prominent artists of the ukiyoe tradition, let us view certain forms of performance and dance that used mask and costume to transform the human figure and that may have influenced, directly or perhaps unconsciously, the depiction of the human face in paintings and prints.

MASKING THE
INDIVIDUAL

Many forms of Edo entertainment had their roots in ancient court and agricultural rituals in which performers donned elaborate costumes, fancifully decorated hats, and masks representing sacred animals or supernatural beings. Such performances had both a religious and a practical function: they helped to exorcise evil spirits while inviting benevolent deities to bestow good fortune on a household or community. The social interaction of the rituals helped forge closer community ties, yet they also fulfilled — for those who performed, joined in, or simply watched — an individual’s basic human need for emotional catharsis and temporary escape from daily cares.

Even as they became increasingly secular, some forms of popular performance held on to a ritual dimension, as seen in the various vignettes of *Itinerant Entertainers*, painted sometime during the Genroku era (cat. 237). These screens document a fascinating array of street dancers and comics,

cat. 237
Itinerant Entertainers,
late seventeenth or early
eighteenth century,
detail from pair of six-panel
screens; ink, color,
and gold on paper,
each 60 x 206 (23⁵/₈ x 81¹/₈),
Preservation Committee
of Oba Local Governor’s Office,
Tokyo



religious solicitors and ambulant entertainers of all varieties. Performers of exorcism rituals journeyed from one household to the next, often accompanied by musicians. Among the performances requiring masks are the Daikoku dance, performed by a man in a black-faced whiskered mask representing one of the gods of good fortune, seen in the upper right corner of the right screen. Another particularly lively scene, in the middle of the same screen, shows lion dancers performing their animated exorcism dances, which occurred during the New Year season. Dancers donning playfully ferocious lion masks and brightly colored costumes hip-hop to music provided by people in fantastic hats decorated with artificial flowers. Masks and costumes temporarily transformed the human performers into beings with magical powers to expel evil and attract good.

The religious or alms-collecting motives behind many of the characters in *Itinerant Entertainers* give way to escapist desires and sheer pleasure in a scroll by Shijō-school painter Ozawa Kagaku that captures views of the costume dance mania that took over Kyoto for several weeks in late spring 1839 (cat. 275). In the artist's vivid tableau based on real events, people in costumes representing Buddhist deities and legendary figures cavort with goblins, fish, bugs, birds, and butterflies. Townspeople in everyday clothes are also caught up in the spirit of the masquerade dance.

The words “dancing incognito” (*fuchi butō*) at the beginning of the scroll are a reminder that the masks and costumes used in folk dances let individuals change their everyday appearances and personalities, thus breaking down traditional reserve and permitting emotions to be freely expressed. Part of the classic definition of play, as proposed by the sociologist Johan Huizinga, is the opportunity it offers for “stepping out of real life into a temporary sphere of activity with a disposition all its own.”² Even if there is no pretense of a profound religious motive, the use of mask and costume reflects a basic human instinct to transcend the mundane world through simulation of the divine or otherworldly.

Among the traditional forms of performance that preserve a ritual aspect, *nō* drama most strongly relies on masks and elaborate robes to create a visual mystique. *Nō*, which flourished and reached its pinnacle of refinement during the medieval period, was most closely associated with the tastes of the samurai elite of Kyoto rather than of the townspeople of Edo. Yet *nō* remained popular through early modern times and literally set the stage for kabuki. Close examination of early paintings of the Shijō (Fourth Avenue) entertainment district of Kyoto reveals that the newly emerging dance and dramatic art of kabuki were performed in structures originally designed for *nō* (see cat. 231).

The slow, stately performances of *nō* — still practiced today — commonly have only two or three performers, of whom the principal character nearly always wears a mask. *Nō* masks, even viewed out of their performative context, where they help set the mood of the play, may be regarded as idealized portrait sculpture of the highest rank, designed to capture the quintessence of specific categories of human experience and emotion or beauty. As in Greek and Roman dramas, which like *nō* were performed exclusively by male actors, the mask was not used to add an element of suspense to *dénouement* scenes but to create a *persona* — as the Latin word for “mask” suggests. In these classical theaters masks were used to overlay the actor's individual presence with a role-specified gender, age, and personality type.

Although *nō* masks have no moving parts, they were carefully crafted so that subtle emotional nuances could be conveyed by an actor tilting a mask up or down to take advantage of shadowing effects.³ In the case of masks for female roles, which are generally less expressive than those for male roles, raising the mask into the light can help project a happier mood, while facing downward envelops the mask in shadows to convey a somber, if not grief-stricken, expression. The masks for male roles often convey extreme feelings of despair or the happy resignation of old age (cats. 210, 211).

cat. 231
Amusements along the Riverside
 at Shijō, late 1620s,
 detail from a pair of two-panel
 screens; ink, color, and
 gold on paper,
 each 164.4 x 172.8 (64³/₄ x 68),
 The Seikado Foundation, Tokyo,
 Important Cultural Property



Masks for female roles usually register categories of age and worldly experience by presenting idealized types of feminine beauty. For instance, the *Zō onna* mask represents a serene, ethereal female beauty (cat. 212). The smooth oval shape and high forehead, with shaved eyebrows and painted replacements near the hairline, recall ancient court ideals of beauty and are features of most female masks. The face seems about to break into a smile, but retains an otherworldly calm. Exceptions to the rule that *nō* masks for female roles do not betray strong emotion are the masks of female demons known as *Hannya* (cat. 214, 215). In their angry expressions and devil-like horns these masks convey a woman's jealousy of a romantic rival.

The first thing one notices about *nō* masks in performances today is their small size; they do not completely cover the face, complicating the illusion of transformation. This appearance in modern performances may be attributable in part to conservative sculpturing practices, which as a rule adhere to measurements of famous masks of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries rather than adjust to the actual face sizes of contemporary actors. Still, as early as the sixteenth century the Portuguese missionary Luis Frois records the disconcerting effect of the diminutive masks: "In our theaters the masks cover the chin starting from the beard downward; the Japanese ones are so small that an actor who appears in a woman's role has his beard always protruding from below."⁴ We may suspect, recalling Chikamatsu's dictum, that the sculptor did not intend to create an illusion of reality. A balance of stylization and reality was more dramatically expressive than pure representation. It was up to the actor to complete the transformation of the character.

The elaborate robes used in *nō* further contribute to the overall majestic ambiance of the performance. During the medieval period wealthy samurai patrons often bestowed lavish robes — the finest gold brocades or silk damasks — on their favorite actors. In the course of the Edo period certain types of garments, with specified patterns and colors, became associated with particular roles, leading to a standardization of costume types. Generally speaking, *nō* robes have a transhistorical quality, not accurately reflecting the fashion or decorative style of any particular period but rather an accretion of the dress customs of court and samurai elites over the course of the entire medieval period. *Nō* troupes to this day continue to use robes that date to the Edo period or are based on styles codified then.

Male characters wear heavy silk robes called *atsuita*, a reference to the kind of cloth from which they were made, which are often elaborately decorated with motifs that conjure poetic sentiments. One magnificent *atsuita nō* robe (cat. 217) is created from panels of silk — half gold and half red — overlaid with calligraphy transcribing poems from the early eleventh-century anthology *Wakan rōeishū* (*Japanese and Chinese Poems for Singing*). Robes for female characters are called *surihaku*, which refers to the traditional technique of decorating the textiles of which they are commonly made. *Surihaku nō* robes in general adhere to an understated aesthetic in comparison to *atsuita*, but still often have elegant decorative motifs. One *surihaku* (cat. 216) is decorated with a brisk design of grasses with dew and snow on a crisp white ground.

In contrast, players in *kyōgen* drama, traditionally performed during the interludes in a cycle of *nō* plays, don garments made of hemp cloth dyed in somber colors. Rather than the lyrical associations of *nō* robe designs, *kyōgen* robes are commonly decorated with mundane motifs such as a radish and mallet (see cat. 225), attributes of Daikokuten, a god of good fortune. *Kyōgen* costumes reflect the character of these plebeian dramas, which flourished during the Edo period in no small part as a result of their capacity to capture the humor and occasional absurdities that arise in daily social interaction.



cat. 212
Nō mask: *Zō onna*,
seventeenth century,
carved wood, gesso,
and pigment,
21 x 13.6 (8 1/4 x 5 3/8),
Ishikawa Prefectural
Museum of Art



cat. 215
Nō mask: *Hannya*,
seventeenth century,
carved wood, gesso, gold,
and pigment,
21.2 x 16.6 (8 3/8 x 6 1/2),
Tokyo National Museum

cat. 217
 Atsuta nō robe with poems,
 seventeenth century,
 gold metallic thread supplement-
 ary weft on silk twill,
 143 x 132.8 (56 1/4 x 52 1/4),
 Tokyo National Museum



Kyōgen does not rely on masks to the extent that nō does, but when it uses them, it is usually to indicate that the characters belong to nonhuman realms, either animal or supernatural. The bizarre contortions and extreme emotions of the mask also are better suited for the rapid, often spasmodic, movements of the kyōgen actor. To be effective the mask must immediately convey the required emotion in the same way that pictorial caricature in cultures East and West relies on the exaggeration of readily identifiable characteristics, either of a particular individual or of a commonly shared expression.

Kyōgen masks with human features differ from their more refined nō counterparts in that they freeze extreme emotional states. The goggly eyes and “oops” pursed lips of the *usobuki* mask (cat. 220) capture the utter silliness of characters who perform skits with all the preposterousness of Sumo Wrestling

with a Mosquito (*Ka zumo*) or *The Battle of Fruits and Nuts* (*Konomi arasoi*). The latter play satirizes the ruling samurai class by staging a slapstick battle scene in which the spirit of a tangerine, wearing an usobuki mask, battles with his chestnut counterpart.⁵ Their desperate struggle over who gets the best spot to view cherry blossoms is abruptly ended when a gust of wind blows both away. Such conspicuous satire of the pomposity and frivolous contentiousness of the samurai class was rare, but we may suppose that the utter absurdity of the plot forestalled punitive intervention from the authorities. Masks, through playful caricature, allowed actors to put a humorous face on satire.

Occasionally kyōgen masks were used to represent elderly men or comically ugly women, but never to suggest the beauty of young women, as often seen in nō. The nō mask presented ideal beauty; nothing in the plebeian world of kyōgen skits required such refinement. Female roles were played by unmasked men. Edo-period masks of animals, such as foxes, badgers, and monkeys, were used in transformation plays in which characters took the form of the creatures. Monkey masks were among the earliest developed, no doubt because of their resemblance to humans — a resemblance close enough to make it clear that human behavior was being suggested but distant enough to provide a disguise of silliness that softened the impact of satiric jabs (cats. 222, 223). It seems that as kyōgen moved into the modern period, actors of animal parts relied more on their powers of mimicry and less on masks to create humorous effect.⁶



cat. 220
Kyōgen mask: Usobuki,
seventeenth century,
carved wood, gesso, and pigment,
19.5 x 12.2 (7⁵/₈ x 4³/₄),
Tokyo National Museum

WOMEN'S
KABUKI

In contrast to nō, which adheres strictly to highly poeticized librettos, kabuki was an actor-centered theater from early on. Kabuki as we know it today — a highly respectable “classical” theater with male actors playing established roles in dramas with complex plots — did not begin to emerge until the late 1600s. In its earliest manifestation it was a dance theater with female performers, as seen in *Amusements along the Riverside at Shijō* (cat. 231). The showy, sexually provocative dances and skits of early kabuki appealed to warrior and commoner alike, and often served as a front for prostitution, though spectators of both sexes enjoyed watching the public performance. *Amusements along the Riverside at Shijō*, dating to the late 1620s, captures this early history, when performers followed in the footsteps of Okuni, the legendary founder of kabuki.

Okuni, who claimed to be a priestess from Izumo Shrine, created quite a stir when she performed dances in Kyoto about 1603, at first along the banks of the Kamo River, the site shown in this screen. Testimony to her extreme popularity, Okuni was invited to perform at Edo Castle in the presence of the shogun in 1607.⁷ Audiences in the capital were long accustomed to the religious and folk dances that she first presented (similar to those in *Itinerant Entertainers*) but had never seen them interpreted in such a provocative, sexually suggestive manner. She also began to improvise *kabuki odori*, “outlandish dances,” using movements and costumes associated with popular dances of the day (*fūryū odori*). Within a few years prostitutes began to offer dances and skits in the style established by Okuni as a means of attracting customers. Bordello owners set up stages in the dry riverbed areas of the Shijō district, as shown in the screen, with the names of the bordellos and courtesans indicated at the entrances.

The carnivalesque scenes of early seventeenth-century screen paintings such as *Amusements along the Riverside at Shijō* are the direct predecessors to ukiyoe of later in the century; they set the stage for an entire artistic movement dedicated to depicting entertainers. The detached objectivity of earlier

genre screens showing panoramic views of the old capital, known as Scenes In and Around Kyoto (*rakuchū-rakugaizu*), gives way to a conspicuously more subjective, warmer representation of plebeian activities. The *Amusements* artist maintained a documentary motivation but managed to convey more effectively the energy of the entertainments — so much so that the screens seem ready to burst their hinges. Town artists (*machi eshi*), though working outside the usual court, temple, or warrior-elite patronage systems, held on to the traditional preoccupation of secular art, which emphasized narrative concerns and landscapes with figures. With a few noteworthy exceptions, artists continued to represent the total environment of townspeople at work or play, not individuals.

In the women's kabuki scene in the left screen of *Amusements along the Riverside at Shijō*, a female performer surrounded by a troupe of female dancers sits grandly on a large chair draped with a tiger skin, holding a long-necked *shamisen*, the three-stringed instrument associated with kabuki and the pleasure quarters from about 1610 (see detail p. 373).⁸ We immediately perceive that we are in an exotic realm of the senses. Japanese of this era did not sit in chairs; tigers never romped in Japan's forests; proper women did not wear tasseled swords at the hip. The chair, tiger skin, and costume are signifiers of a nonquotidian realm of pleasure and escape, where rules of decorum are breached. The painter transmits the message that the dancers are there for the spectators' pleasure.

Yet if we telescope in on the faces of the courtesan-dancers, we must conclude that the depictions are rather stereotyped. Belying the lively bustle of the overall scene, their bland faces — powdered white, blemishless, and formalized — betray no individual allure. The artist was clearly capable of portraying a wide range of facial types, as we can judge by the variety of expressions seen among the boisterous male spectators, but the female performers are presented with redundant resemblance. Their faces are no more distinctive or expressive than *nō* masks for female roles, in contrast to the exaggerated *kyōgen*-like expressiveness of the male figures. We may speculate that the artist unconsciously conspired with the bordello owners who set up the stage. The dancers are in effect prostitutes whose bodies are for sale to the highest bidder. Faces and bodies are thus commodified, predictably packaged, and completely interchangeable. One dancer is as good as the next. Only the high-ranking courtesan (*tayū*) seated on the tiger-skin seat is given an elevated position in the visual hierarchy, reflecting her status in the bordello pecking order and a higher price to the male customer.

A central factor in the development of ukiyoe was the emergence of paintings of kabuki performers from Shijō or of dancers who worked in the entertainment districts. In such images landscape backgrounds and interior settings would often dissolve completely and allow the artist to seize on an idealized image of feminine beauty. For example, each panel of one six-panel screen (cat. 232) shows a dancer delicately balancing a fan and posing against an unbroken golden ground. Arrayed in a colorful *kosode* with eye-catching patterns, each woman has facial features that are attractive but not distinctive, suggesting that much of the original appeal of the painting was in its snapshot of textile fashions of the day. The eroticism of later ukiyoe painters and print designers, who were directly inspired by these solitary images of beautiful women, is largely absent. The artist indicates his decorative intent in the meticulously detailed robes and the highly formalized poses of the dancers, but he also sought a visual equilibrium commensurate with the bodily balance of a dancer. The extended hands, slightly turned torsos, and bent legs give the impression of the figures' shifting weight. Within the folds of the glamorous robes we detect carefully examined figural frameworks, though the outlines of the bodies themselves are only hinted at by costume.



cat. 232
Dancers, late 1620s – 1630s,
detail from a
six-panel screen;
ink, color, and gold on paper,
63.3 x 240 (24⁷/₈ x 94¹/₂),
Kyoto City,
Important Cultural Property

Young women’s kabuki was completely outlawed by the authorities in 1629 because of its link to prostitution — and because samurai were fighting over favorite performers. Although kabuki performance by women was officially banned, evidence from surviving paintings suggests that it persisted through the early 1640s.⁹ The young women of the earliest period of kabuki were initially replaced by teenage boys known as *wakashu*, who also offered sexual services to male clients to make a living. Eventually the authorities clamped down on young boys’ kabuki as well, and by the 1660s adult male performers had to rely on their acting skills rather than sexual innuendo to captivate their audiences. Young actors still performed female roles but had to shave their forelocks (apparently a highly erogenous feature). Actors responded by covering the exposed pate with a purple kerchief, which ironically was transformed into a visual signal with as much if not more sexual suggestiveness than the one it was meant to conceal.

EARLY EDO
EVOCATIONS OF
FEMALE
BEAUTY

The realms of bordello culture and kabuki would remain intimately connected through their subsequent development. During the 1620s many star performers of women’s kabuki, such as those making their appearance in *Amusements along the Riverside at Shijō*, did a double shift as courtesans of the Yanagimachi district in nearby Rokujō (Sixth Avenue). Since on stylistic grounds the *Hikone Screen* (cat. 233) can be dated to this period or slightly later, the setting is assumed to be one of the Yanagimachi bordellos. The screen’s popular name refers to the Hikone fiefdom, where the Ii family, the former owners of the screen, once held power. That this screen of bordello culture was long in possession of a daimyo family shows that the earliest patrons of scenes of the pleasure quarters were wealthy samurai. By the late seventeenth century members of the merchant class would become the primary patrons of paintings on bordello themes.

Part of the allure of the *Hikone Screen* can be ascribed to its intriguing compositional arrangements of figures and the accoutrements of leisure, or to its parodic allusion to the traditional theme of the Four Accomplishments of music, board games, calligraphy, and painting (see detail p. 368), but the screen somehow transcends these concerns. While enjoying its more accessible decorative aspects — the tasteful coloring and textile designs of the garments, scrupulous brushwork, and narrative content — we primarily notice the facial expressions of the figures. The work is meant to be a scene of figures at play, but does anyone look as if he or she is having fun? As various critics have pointed out, the painting is suffused with a mysterious, somewhat melancholy, almost frigid quality.¹⁰ In this regard the *Hikone Screen* is a radical artistic statement, cutting to the core of the aesthetics of Japanese figural representation. It anticipates the entire genre of *ukiyoe*, where images tease the viewer by evocations of beauty, sensuality, and poetic mood while betraying little or no deeply felt individual emotion.

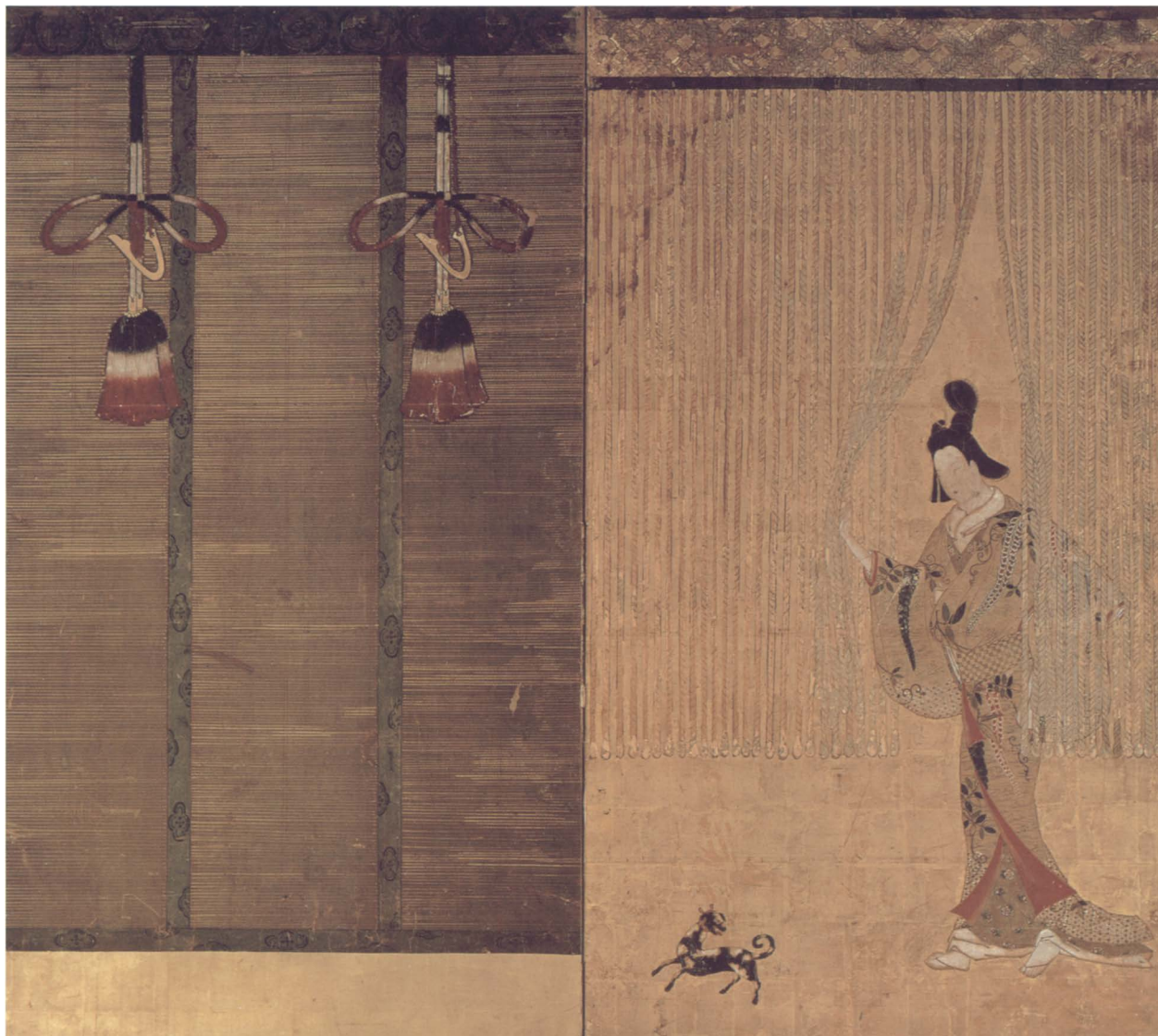
In the left section of the screen a strong visual contrast is established between the ethereal realm of the monochrome landscape in a meticulously brushed Chinese style and the worldly ambiance of the bordello pursuits in the foreground. The screen within the screen may be read as an abridged version of the Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers, a classic theme in Chinese and then Japanese painting, one commonly borrowed by Kano artists. The mountainous landscape, misty and nebulous, represents a symbolic realm of intellectual escape for a samurai literatus. In this painting, created at the dividing point between the late medieval and early modern stages of Japanese history, we see the landscape suited to samurai taste being supplanted by the realm of human pleasures. The land-

scape setting of Kano paintings, now being displaced by genre interests, can soon be folded away to make room for screens devoted to the human figure.

Like figures on a Grecian urn, the silent subjects are frozen in a tableau that overall suggests a scene of music, game playing, and romance, yet they are caught in the frustrating limbo of amorous anticipation never to be fulfilled. The female faces are as timeless and inexpressive as the *Zō onna nō* mask. To contemplate the *Hikone Screen* at length brings on a faint discomfort reminiscent of the original connotation of the word *ukiyo*. It was at first written with characters meaning “sorrowful world” rather than the more buoyant “floating world.” The earlier interpretation relies on a Buddhist philosophy that saw suffering in the transience of all worldly phenomena, including human relations. The later sense of the word seized on a hedonistic enjoyment of pleasures here and now.

Another pivotal work in the history of the depiction of individual female figures is an anonymous painting of the early seventeenth century evocatively titled *The Rope Curtain* (cat. 234). Here we see a courtesan, presumably of high rank by virtue of her elegant dress and elaborate coiffure, pausing at the door of a bordello, perhaps bidding farewell to a client. A patron of the pleasure quarters of the age — the same kind of person who would commission such a scene — might feel a certain wistfulness at the

cat. 234
The Rope Curtain,
c. 1640s, two-panel folding screen
(left panel added at later date);
ink, color, and gold on paper,
each 159.7 x 180.6 (62⁷/₈ x 71¹/₈),
The Arc-en-Ciel
Foundation, Tokyo,
Important Cultural Property





moment of departure, or indulge his male pride in thinking that his leaving moved the courtesan emotionally. Imaginatively entering into the courtesan's psychological state — her face offers not a clue — we may speculate about two possibilities: she, too, is sad to see a special customer leave for the night, or she is glad to see him go.

More than the image of her face (which has suffered some damage over the years), the entire scene conveys a dispassionate aura. The yelping dog only draws further attention to her silent brooding. At some later date the main panel was joined with another panel showing bamboo shades, which causes us to ponder further the metaphors of separation and screening, of violable visual barriers, and ultimately of voyeurism. The print artist Kitagawa Utamaro would use this technique of screening with sophisticated effect over a century later in prints on the theme of women perceived through bamboo blinds or a mosquito net (cat. 256).

As visible in the early genre paintings discussed, and in later paintings of the ukiyoe tradition, an artist's technical prowess, color sense, and creativity are often best demonstrated in the meticulous rendering of a woman's robes. Bold patterns, sumptuous color combinations, and imaginative interpretations of nature or classical literary motifs are hallmarks of garments in Edo-period paintings of beautiful women. In such works we may view the patterns on the garments as something of an inverted landscape; rather than landscape framing a scene, the human form becomes a frame on which landscape in the form of patterned garments is supported.

The ultimate statement of the Japanese artist's obsession with depicting attire is found in screens on the poetic theme of *tagasode*, literally "whose sleeves?" Paintings of luxurious garments draped on racks, their wearers out of sight, conjure notions of beautiful courtesans and erotic encounters. Poems on the *tagasode* theme date to the Heian court of the tenth to thirteenth centuries, where the wearing of fine garments became a language of political and personal significance, as illustrated by court novels such as the *Tale of Genji*.

In one example of a *tagasode* screen our gaze is first drawn to the desk with books and a lacquer writing box with its lid off-kilter, as though someone was interrupted in the middle of his or her studies (cat. 235). The eye then sweeps upward, adjusting to the head-on point of view used to depict the robes. Finally we are tempted to move from the brightly lit, gold-leaf-plastered walls of the study to find out what goes on in the darkness behind the closed sliding panels. As in *The Rope Curtain*, by showing an outer view of a private realm, the artist evocatively alludes to the unseen dimension of inner feelings and imagination.

cat. 238
Attributed to Hishikawa
Moronobu, *Kabuki*
at the Nakamura Theater,
c. 1690, detail from a pair of
six-panel screens;
ink, color, and gold on paper,
each 170 x 397 (67 x 156¼),
Tokyo National Museum,
Important Art Object

MORONOBU'S FLOATING WORLD

By the late seventeenth century, as Edo began to rival Kyoto and Osaka as a cultural center, kabuki was quickly developing into serious theater, with adult male actors performing in complex plays. Two examples of late seventeenth-century screens attributed to Hishikawa Moronobu, one of the founding artists of the ukiyoe school of painting, document this new phase of kabuki staged entirely by male actors (cats. 238, 239). Although most scholars believe that the works were probably not created under Moronobu's direct supervision, they are in the artist's distinctive style.

Both sets of screens offer a front-row seat to the activities surrounding the Nakamura kabuki theater in Edo about 1690. In the Tokyo National Museum version (cat. 238) a troupe of *wakashu*, young male kabuki dancers, colorfully dressed in male and female costumes, parade across the stage in the finale of the performance. Musicians visible on stage strum *shamisen* and pound drums. People of all

classes enjoy the spectacle from their seats in the pounded-earth area, while wealthier theater patrons watch from private enclosures. The right panels of the left screen of the same set show a behind-the-scenes view of the bustling greenroom adjoining the stage, where musicians and actors of all types prepare for their entrances (see detail p. 380). In this remarkable laboratory of transformations of the human figure, some actors are donning demon masks while others dress up as courtiers, priests, street gallants, and medieval warriors. Shielded by a magnificent gold folding screen with flower motifs, an *onnagata*, or a performer of female roles, is being dressed by his attendant. Judging from the lavish robes and hairstyle, the male actor is being transformed into a high-ranking courtesan.

By the end of the seventeenth century prostitutes of the government-sanctioned bordellos in the major cities joined kabuki actors as the most common subjects of popular art of the period. Artists took as their subject matter prostitutes of every variety, from common streetwalkers who operated outside the licensed quarters to courtesans (here used to refer generically to high-ranking prostitutes) and geisha (who made their living primarily as performers of music and dance). Government-sanctioned prostitution was viewed as a safety valve for society in which every aspect of political, economic, and personal interaction was carefully regulated by Confucian authority. Each of the great Japanese cities had its own courtesan district — Yoshiwara in Edo, Shimabara (the successor to Yanagimachi) in Kyoto, Shinmachi in Osaka, and Maruyama in Nagasaki.¹¹ But prostitutes worked the streets in other, unsanctioned areas, too.

Despite the tragic realities of a system built on sexual slavery, Yoshiwara, both real and fictive, captivated the imagination of the townspeople. Primary attention was accorded well-known courtesans and geisha and teahouse waitresses affiliated with established bordellos there. Artists turned idealized images of these women into a separate genre of prints and painting, allowing art and reality to reinforce each other continually. Courtesans were presented by ukiyoe artists as perfectly beautiful women in gorgeous robes and fabulous coiffures, at the cutting edge of style, accomplished in music and literary arts, aloof in demeanor, and unapproachable to all but the wealthiest and most sophisticated patrons. In reality, only a small percentage of courtesans could command such respect, but an entire unsavory system gained a certain cultural credibility in the creation of an ideal.

Courtesans made quite a splash during their public processions in the Yoshiwara district: their made-up lips and eyes stood out against faces powdered white; their fantastically expensive garments reflected the latest fashion; and elaborate hairdos festooned with lacquer and gold hairpins bespoke their rank in the brothel hierarchy. Ukiyoe artists took advantage of the public's fascination with the lives and affairs of famous courtesans by fabricating an idealized version of the bordello culture. In the earliest stages of depiction artists represented courtesans in fully appointed settings — showing them interacting with patrons, playing board games, joining in poetry-writing contests, dancing, sharing food and drink, or simply frolicking in brothel public rooms.

Moronobu was one of the greatest chroniclers of the Yoshiwara pleasure quarters. His images of the floating world of the bordello and theater districts have a disarming simplicity, or, might we say, an elemental passion. Adding to the visual impact of his work in various media (including woodblock prints and illustrations) is the meticulous rendering of textile designs. Though in Moronobu's case we may deduce an indebtedness to training in the family business of designing and making embroidery or dyed patterns for textiles, we can generalize and state that, during this age, without the ability to create meticulous textile designs an artist could not have made his mark in genre painting.

Moronobu's work anticipated and contributed to the cultural frisson of the Genroku era (referring broadly to the final decades of the seventeenth and early decades of the eighteenth centuries), the brilliance of which is amply documented by surviving prints and paintings of the day, and by the frolicsome novels of Ihara Saikaku (1642 – 1693) and puppet plays of Chikamatsu Monzaemon, whose plots formed the basis of many kabuki plays. It was a time when artists of great imagination and talent reflected on the forces that ruled people's emotional lives and captured them in art for posterity. Genroku was an era of conspicuous opulence, of luxurious tastes in food, fashion, and art, when the wealthy merchant class exercised a great say over cultural production.

A scene from the first scroll of Moronobu's *Scenes of Daily Life in Edo* shows a panorama of men and women enjoying an outing on the Sumida River (cat. 240). The name of the roofed pleasure boat is *Kawatake-maru*, written with characters that literally mean "Ship of the River Warrior," but which pun on the homonym *kawatake*, recalling the common reference of the day to a prostitute who is cast adrift in the world like "a piece of bamboo on the river." Inside the boat groups of people, separated by gender, enjoy music or watch a go match while indulging in sake and snacks; in the smaller boat alongside the *Kawatake-maru* tasty dishes are being prepared (see detail pp. 384 – 385). Nearby a "boar's tusk" boat ferries passengers to and from Yoshiwara.¹²

Scenes such as this conjure the new sense of the floating world as described by popular writers of the day. Asai Ryōi (1612? – 1691), for example, wrote in his novel *Tales of the Floating World* (*Ukiyo monogatari*), "Living only for the moment, turning our full attention to the pleasures of the moon, the snow, the cherry blossoms, and the maple leaves; singing songs, drinking wine, diverting ourselves in just floating, floating; caring not a whit for the pauperism staring us in the face, refusing to be disheartened, like a gourd floating along with the river current; this is what we call the *floating world*."¹³ Ryōi's comments reveal how the concept of *ukiyo* had entirely shed its original pessimistic Buddhist connotations.

Moronobu's view of the world was one in which people behaved according to strictly defined social relationships, or in response to deep human feeling, or as driven by uncontrollable sexual desire. In his prints and paintings he effectively conveys this dynamic energy through small group scenes in which figures relate to each other according to infinitely complex laws of physical attraction, aloof voyeurism, or complete lack of passion. Moronobu's genius was in capturing the dynamism of human interaction, more often than not between young men and women, though in the spirit of an age when homosociality flourished, he also recorded the chemistry between older men and teenage boys, as detailed for instance in the left screen of the kabuki paintings from the Tokyo National Museum (cat. 238) or in the last scene of the first scroll of *Scenes of Daily Life in Edo*.¹⁴

IDEALIZED BEAUTY

In western art there is a distinct tradition of portraiture comprising full-length paintings of eminent women, usually specific individuals. In contrast, the Japanese tradition of *bijinga*, "pictures of beautiful women," focused on unidentified young women (or occasionally nameable courtesans) presented with a strong tinge of eroticism. The closest parallel is perhaps European paintings of female nudes, a mode of representation that did not emerge in Japan until modern times. Rather, paintings of beautiful women during early modern times focused entirely on facial features, elegant coiffures, and beautiful garments.

There is no better spokesperson of the aesthetic values of the age than Ihara Saikaku, a writer of popular fiction during the Genroku era. In an episode of his *Life of an Amorous Woman* (*Kōshoku ichidai*





cat. 240
Hishikawa Moronobu,
Scenes of Daily Life in Edo,
early 1690s,
detail from handscroll;
ink and color on silk,
34.4 x 423.3 (13 1/2 x 166 5/8),
Idemitsu Museum
of Arts, Tokyo

onna) of 1686, a novel of love in the pleasure quarters, we find the narrator's comment about the ideal of feminine beauty and the mutual reinforcement of these ideals in the realm of the male viewer: "When I asked what type of woman he was hoping to get, the old man took from a scroll-case of paulownia wood a picture of a beautiful woman, saying that he would like to hold in his arms a living replica made from this model."¹⁵

It is interesting to observe that the man owned a picture but was still hoping to meet a living woman as beautiful as the painting. Saikaku's account goes on to describe the *bijin* painting style of the late seventeenth through early eighteenth centuries:

The woman in the picture was from fifteen to eighteen years of age. Her face, which had an up-to-date look, was roundish and of the color of pale cherry blossoms. Her features were flawless: the eyes, by his wish, were not narrow; the thick brows did not grow too close together; the nose was straight; the mouth was small with regular, white teeth; and the long ears, which had delicate rims, stood away from the head so that one could see through to the roots. Her hair at the forehead grew naturally and with no trace of artificiality. The back hair fell over her downless slender neck. Her fingers were pliant and long with thin nails. Her feet could not have had the breadth of eight copper coins; the big toes curled upwards and the soles were translucently delicate. Her body was above average in size. The hips were firm and not fleshy, the buttocks full. Elegant in movement and in dress, her bearing possessed both dignity and gentleness. She excelled in the arts required of women, and was ignorant of nothing. There was not a single mole on her entire body.¹⁶

This detailed description coincides with surviving paintings of the era by the anonymous painters of so-called Kanbun beauties as well as paintings of female subjects by Moronobu, artists of the Kaigetsudō school, and Miyagawa Chōshun (1682 – c. 1752). The statement that the eyes "by his wish" were not narrow is particularly revealing, for it indicates that the image of beauty could be influenced, specifically shaped, and then purchased by a wealthy male patron. That the man would want eyes less narrow connotes a desire for a more expressive personality, but it also suggests that the norm was for narrow, inexpressive eyes. Later works in ukiyoe history, including Utamaro's prints of *bijin* subjects, vary the width of eyes as one of the subtle ways to establish differences between representations of women. Finally, by mentioning the woman's cultural refinement and erudition but then concluding with a non sequitur about her blemish-free skin, the narrator reveals the superficial priorities of floating world values.

Saikaku's description is pertinent to a painting by Kaigetsudō Dohan (cat. 242), a noted pupil of Kaigetsudō Ando (active early eighteenth century), whose atelier specialized in depictions of courtesans.¹⁷ The trademark Kaigetsudō style is to present women in magnificent robes of bold, colorful textile design but with faces marked by a passive, disengaged gaze. Here a statuesque courtesan wrapped in luxurious robes stares off into the distance. Though there is nothing in the picture for comparison, the artistic decision to make the subject nearly fill the composition gives the impression that her body is "above average in size," as in Saikaku's description.

The model established and consolidated into a ukiyoe paradigm by Moronobu and painters of the Kaigetsudō lineage is even more conspicuous in the *bijin* paintings of Miyagawa Chōshun (cat. 245). Incense wafts from a small censer hidden in the collar of a high-ranking courtesan's floral robes. Or perhaps we are meant to imagine incense smoke working its way up her body beneath her robes from the censer at her feet. The latter possibility, though unworkable in reality, is more sensuously provoca-

tive in the realm of artistic imagination. The courtesan's long, uncoiffed hair suggests that she has just returned from the bath and is perhaps preparing for a sexual liaison. The light brown obi is loosely knotted in front, the usual practice for courtesans. She is seated on a *sugoroku* board, used for a backgammon-like game, and we recall earlier paintings in the tradition, such as the *Hikone Screen*, in which the game board is associated with interaction between men and women. Her nearly recumbent posture, defying gravity, conveys an understated sensuousness. In the geometry of desire underlying the painting, the triangular arrangement of the courtesan in relation to the accoutrements of leisure works against the diagonals of the folding screen, imbuing the work with an ever-so-slight sense of libidinal chaos.

IMAGES OF YOUTHFUL BEAUTY

The painted screens and hanging scrolls just described serve as excellent indicators of the talents and priorities of early ukiyoe artists, but we should remember that they were created for comparatively wealthy patrons and were limited in number and circulation. In contrast, ukiyoe produced by means of woodblock prints, in editions ranging into the several thousands, were easily affordable even by a person of limited means. The earliest prints, such as those produced during the age of Moronobu, were produced from a single woodblock. Among the incunabula of Edo printmaking, coloring, if attempted at all, was by the inefficient means of hand painting.

In the 1760s publishers began to experiment with using multiple blocks to produce polychrome ukiyoe prints. The central figure in this revolution was the print designer Suzuki Harunobu. His first designs were privately commissioned picture calendars that were circulated in very limited editions among literary or artistic circles. An example is the image of a *wakashu* (an elegant young man) presented as the deity Ebisu, one of the gods of good fortune (cat. 248), who is usually depicted as a fat old fisherman. That this print was designed as a calendar picture is evidenced by the numbers of the long months of 1765 cleverly interwoven in the design of the fish.

This image by Harunobu is an example of a "transpositional print," or *mitate-e*.¹⁸ The *wakashu* in effeminate garb appears with identifying attributes of the deity, including a fishing pole and toy sea bream (*tai*). Harunobu was a master of such delightful if not outrageous juxtapositions of opposites — turning old into new, male into female, sacred into profane. Other excellent examples of this technique of parody in *mitate-e* can be seen in Harunobu's depiction of another god of good fortune, Daikokuten, as a woman (cat. 247) and in his imaginative resituating of the Heian poet Ono no Komachi in a contemporary setting with modern dress (cat. 252). Traditional themes are cleverly recast, often reaffirming cultural icons and classical motifs while making eye-catching, even humorous, visual jabs. *Mitate-e* became increasingly popular through the late Edo period, at least in part because of an increased availability of popular editions of Chinese and Japanese literary classics.

Once Harunobu perfected his formula for depicting feminine beauty, either in *mitate-e* or in images of Edo demimondaines, he used it for the rest of his career. His portrayal of women completely eschews the statuesque, robust presence of a *Kaigetsudō* or *Chōshun* woman for a more diminutive and delicate feminine presence. Harunobu's figures have tiny hands and feet, perhaps symbolizing a powerlessness to resist male advances. Bodies are fragile, almost weightless, and seemingly prone to inertia. The women's oval faces are stereotyped, completely devoid of individuality, and they betray little evidence of age, experience, or emotion of any sort. Yet as Harunobu experimented with composition and color schemes over about five years, he turned these unassuming young female figures into players



cat. 247
Suzuki Harunobu,
Daikokuten as a Woman, 1765,
color woodblock print,
24.8 x 19.1 (9³/₄ x 7¹/₂),
Tokyo National Museum

cat. 248
Suzuki Harunobu,
Ebisu as a Young Man, 1765,
color woodblock print,
26 x 19.8 (10¹/₄ x 7³/₄),
Tokyo National Museum,
Important Art Object

in an intriguing universe of complex lyricism. Borrowing from ancient poetry anthologies, he included poems in many of his prints that often have no relation to the image except to add an aura of poesy, nostalgia, and elegance.

Having first relied on private commissions to produce polychrome prints, Harunobu's publishers reissued many of his designs in commercial editions, which enjoyed great popularity. The artist is at his best in his scene of a young woman making a pilgrimage to a shrine on a rainy night (cat. 249), or in his images of youths on veranda, which let us spy on intensely private moments (cats. 250, 251). In the latter, a maid watches the scene on the veranda through a crack in the sliding doors as a woman draws closer to a young man. The artist has cleverly placed the viewer of the print in the same position as the maid, that of a voyeur.

Harunobu plays with the viewer's emotions as he creates such visual haiku of sensual experiences. No doubt he and his publishers were fully aware that images of this type relied on their ability to tease and tantalize — both in erotic suggestiveness and pure aesthetic delight — but not to completely satisfy. As many modern aficionados of ukiyoe prints have discovered, there is greater delight in viewing prints as a series than in trying to understand the artist's intent in a single image.

Mention should be made of another conspicuous aspect of Harunobu's figures — the generally effeminate characteristics of the males. At first glance it is difficult to tell in the scene of lovers on the veranda that the figure on the left is a man (cat. 251). Only the small shaven section of his pate reveals his gender: he wears the forelocks of a young male.¹⁹ The term *bijin*, which literally means "beautiful person," can be used as a tag of approbation for both men and women, but still, in the genre of *bijinga*, individual paintings of elegant young men are quite rare.

Among images of “beautiful” young men from the late eighteenth century is a sensitive interpretation by Katsukawa Shunchō of one elegant youth, wearing a sword tucked in his sash, meeting another who smokes a long-stemmed pipe by the riverside (cat. 253). The scene of young men alone is suffused with homoerotic imagery: pipe, swords, fans, and irises (associated with Boy’s Day) act as phallic signifiers in a sexual reading of the image. Finally, as in Moronobu’s compositions of a century earlier, water becomes an important symbol of the “floating world,” transient emotions, fleeting affairs, passing time, and in an ironic sense, the aging process.

UTAMARO’S
STYLISH
COURTESANS
AND GEISHA

Among artists of the late eighteenth century who broke new ground in the depiction of female beauty was Kitagawa Utamaro. Though best known to posterity and in his own day as a print designer, he was a skilled painter as well. In a painting on silk mounted as a hanging scroll, a young woman in summer attire peers intently into a small hand mirror as she repairs her makeup (cat. 254). Her understated summer robes are set off by a green obi. In the fashion of the day playing something showy against a subtle ground was the essence of good taste. Something as flashy as that seen in early examples of bijin painting by Kaigetsudō Dohan or Miyagawa Chōshun would have been considered gaudy.

Closer examination of the image, however, reveals a small exposed section of the bright red underlining of her robes — a hint of eroticism. In this regard the painting may be seen to embody the aesthetic ideal of “stylish chic,” *iki*, associated with bordello culture in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. One of the most elaborate explications of the concept of *iki* is found in *The Structure of Edo Aesthetic Style* (“*Iki*” no *kōzō*) by Kuki Shūzō, published in 1930.²⁰ Kuki discusses at length the aesthetic priorities of the floating world, including Yoshiwara, the kabuki theaters, and the popular arts that derived inspiration from them. In great detail he chronicled the customs, fashions, literature, and cultural artifacts associated with the pleasure quarters. He did not see Yoshiwara culture as a symbol of Edo decadence or debauchery but rather viewed it as displaying admirable pluck and resistance. Most germane here is Kuki’s perceptive documentation of changing criteria of feminine beauty during the late Edo period. For instance, “Saikaku expressed the ideal of voluptuous beauty during the Genroku period when he said, ‘The face in fashion today is slightly rounded.’ In contrast, Kaseiki [late eighteenth/early nineteenth centuries] favored the refined elegance of an oval-shaped face.” Kuki’s observation extended to the preferred female figure: “slender, long and willow-waisted is thought to be one of the objective expressions of *iki*. The one who proclaimed this with the faith of a fanatic was Utamaro.”²¹

Utamaro was an innovator in another late eighteenth-century development in the ukiyoe tradition: half-length and bust portraits. Influenced by western categories of portraiture, such images have in turn been highly admired by European and American connoisseurs. These portraits complete the process of removing human figures from their environment; not only is a solitary figure isolated, but anything extraneous is eliminated so that attention is concentrated on the face and upper body.

A classic example of Utamaro’s half-length portraiture style is the print *The Fancy-Free Type*, which captures a young woman just finishing her bath (cat. 255).²² The print belongs to a series entitled *Ten Types of Female Physiognomy* (though only five designs were produced).²³ In them the artist seems to be advertising himself as an expert with special insight into female personality. But how does he capture the inner essence of the women he depicts? Not through specific facial depiction. All of his women



cat. 255
 Kitagawa Utamaro,
The Fancy-Free Type,
 from *Ten Types of Female*
Physiognomy,
 c. 1792–1793,
 color woodblock with mica,
 37.8 x 24.3 (14 7/8 x 9 1/2),
 Tokyo National Museum,
 Important Cultural Property

look so much alike that one can hardly pretend to see pronounced differences of individual expression or emotion, though subtleties of stylistic nuance do occur from one image to the next. If pressed on the issue, one might conclude that facial features are of less consequence to the artist than the set of her hair or the design of her garments. One suspects Utamaro was playing a game with his audience, daring them to superimpose their own psychological interpretation onto his evocative images. Here, for instance, the artist has described this woman as the “fancy-free” type. Timothy Clark’s translation puts the term in the Edo context — the young woman is “fickle” or “promiscuous” and at the same time a bit “showy.”²⁴ Her deflected glance, state of dishabille, and casually appointed hair contribute to the impression of a fancy-free type or a happy-go-lucky courtesan.

SHARAKU’S ACTORS

Whereas Utamaro focused on beauty prints, the mystery-enshrouded Tōshūsai Sharaku, who was active in the Edo art scene for a short year beginning in early 1794, acquired lasting fame for his powerful bust portraits of actors. The earliest examples were lavishly printed with rich dark mica backgrounds (cats. 259 – 264). Sharaku created a sensation with his naturalistic, slightly exaggerated, and sometimes unflattering portraits. One example shows the male kabuki actor Segawa Tomisaburō II as Yadorigi, the wife of a townsman (cat. 259). The kerchief over the actor’s forehead recalls an earlier age, when young male actors of female roles were required to shave their forelocks and cover their shaven pates.

Such prints recall the fascination with cross-dressing that was central to the allure of kabuki from its beginnings, when female performers dressed in male costume and brandished swords — in provocative sexual symbolism, not in self-defense. Whereas male acting troupes were still the norm in Shakespearean theaters of late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century England, women eventually took over female roles there. In contrast, by the mid-seventeenth century in Japan women no longer performed on kabuki stages, and the onnagata (men who performed female roles) continued to hone their cross-dressing performances into the modern period. Audiences have always been intrigued by the way men could portray women, not simply by mimicking the appearance of real women, but by capturing and exaggerating a (socially constructed) ideal of femininity. On the kabuki stage the illusion of machismo or femininity was enhanced by the use of makeup and costume.

Those accustomed to the highly stylized, masklike images of woman in the bijin tradition will be caught off guard by the less than flattering features of Sharaku’s onnagata. The carefully articulated nose and squarish outlines of the jowls and jutting jaw run counter to a long tradition of smooth oval or softly rounded faces of beautiful women. Rather than the usually passive gaze of paintings of women, the scornful attitude and recalcitrant personality of the actor are conveyed by tiny eyes, arched eyebrows, and tightly closed lips. The hand does not hold the robe with the frail fingers of a Harunobu maiden but clenches it with a decidedly masculine strength. All this distortion of ideal femininity becomes more remarkable when we recall that the lineage of Segawa actors were renowned for their graceful stage portrayals of onnagata roles, and that most ukiyoe artists adhered to traditional conventions of beauty prints when depicting them.

Scholarly myths have evolved to explain Sharaku’s precipitous disappearance: the satiric portrayal of popular actors did not go over well with the public, or the actors themselves took umbrage at the less than flattering portraits.²⁵ Such theories, however, do not properly account for the fact that the artist seems to have been extremely popular with managers of all three major theaters and that several

cat. 271
 Keisai Eisen, *Courtesan*,
 c. 1820s,
 color woodblock print,
 approx. 75 x 25 (29½ x 9⅞),
 Private Collection,
 New York

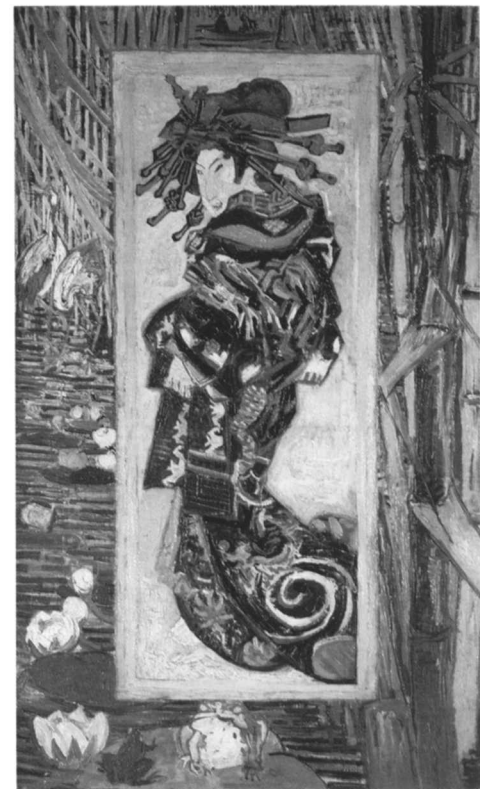


fig. 1
 Vincent van Gogh,
The Courtesan,
 1888, oil on canvas,
 105.5 x 60.5 (41½ x 23⅞),
 Van Gogh Museum,
 Amsterdam
 (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

of his prints went into second editions. If his prints were not selling in early 1794, publishers would not have allowed him to go on creating designs through the end of the year.²⁶ Whatever the reason for his abrupt resignation from the Edo art scene, Sharaku's actor portraits were rediscovered by European collectors early in the century and now rank among the most cherished ukiyoe prints.

Since the turn of the century most western aficionados of ukiyoe have tended to view Utamaro's works as the culmination of the bijinga tradition and everything that followed as evidence of a degeneration in the skills of both designers and printmakers. They argue that the overproduction of prints led to a decline in the overall quality of prints of beauties and that the only category of later prints worthy of admiration are the landscapes of Hokusai and Hiroshige. Yet such a view stubbornly clings to a narrow view held by certain early connoisseurs who perhaps felt uncomfortable with a less idealized view of feminine beauty presented by late Edo ukiyoe artists. In fact, if we retrace the history of the reception of Japanese prints in the West, we discover that among the print designers who had the greatest impact on European artists of the late nineteenth century were Keisai Eisen and Utagawa Kunisada.

Both Eisen and Kunisada (the latter, some say, in reaction to Eisen's innovations) started to develop a style of bijin print using angular, sharp-edged outlines for facial features and garments in about the 1820s.²⁷ The hunched shoulders and crouched stance become more pronounced after this time. From the svelte, artificially elongated women of Utamaro, we find a less flattering but probably more realistic portrayal of courtesans whose postures were ruined by a paltry diet and constant kneeling and crouching on the floor in service of patrons.²⁸

In considering Eisen's portraiture style, it is interesting to compare one of his images of a high-ranking courtesan or *oiran* (cat. 271) to a painting of a Japanese courtesan by Vincent van Gogh that it influenced (fig. 1). Eisen uses the relatively unusual format of a vertical print diptych to capture the aloof presence of a courtesan bedecked in robes with a bold design of a dragon soaring over swirling waves against a black background. Van Gogh's courtesan faces to the left rather than the right, as in Eisen's design, because his inspiration was not the actual print but a cover illustration of *Paris illustré* (May 1886, "Le Japon"), which published the image in reverse. Apparently Van Gogh made a tracing and a grid sketch of the magazine cover and then transferred the sketch in enlarged form to canvas. The fanciful border painting surrounding Van Gogh's courtesan — a pond with water lilies, reeds, and bamboo interspersed with figures in a boat, toads, and cranes — seems to be a composite of images borrowed from less well known Utagawa-school artists of the late Edo period.²⁹

Van Gogh was fascinated by Japanese culture and by 1886 had begun to collect Japanese prints in earnest while in Paris; at one point he toyed with the idea of dealing in prints to raise extra cash. It was during this period that he created a handful of oil paintings based on Japanese prints — including this portrait of a courtesan and two images derived from Hiroshige's series *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo*, namely *Plum Garden at Kameido* and *Sudden Shower over Ōhashi Bridge* (cats. 146, 149).³⁰

To conclude our discussion of the depiction of the human figure, we summon the work of Utagawa Kuniyoshi, who was active until just a few years before the Edo period ended. In addition to creating numerous playful prints in which he replaced human figures with representations of animals, Kuniyoshi brought pictorial play with the human form to its final extreme in the realm of figure prints. In a fascinating series of four published prints of composite portraits (see cats. 277–279) he used small images of the human body as malleable pictorial elements to fashion human faces. The technique can be compared with the popular allegorical composite portraits by the sixteenth-century Italian mannerist painter Giuseppe Arcimboldo, which are made up of fruits and vegetable, fishes and animals, and occasionally of miniature human figures, as in Kuniyoshi's prints.³¹

But Kuniyoshi's images transcend the sheer playfulness of such works in other traditions. His iconoclastic pictures spoof human personality types and subvert the whole tradition of representing individual figures. Earlier in the essay we suggested that one could read the entire body of a subject as a "face," but now we are confronted with a face composed of bodies. Kuniyoshi's fanciful constructions of human faces may be viewed as a veiled response to political, social, and artistic restrictions imposed by the Tenpō Reforms of the early 1840s, which purportedly aimed at uplifting the country's moral standards. Sumptuary laws especially targeted those who profited from activities associated with the floating world, including actors and prostitutes, popular writers, and ukiyoe artists. According to the new censorship laws, artists were forbidden to create identifiable images of contemporary kabuki actors, courtesans, and geisha. By creating images of men and women whose identities can never be completely disentangled from a collective social identity, Kuniyoshi's composite portraits may be seen as poking fun at the authorities who would deny artists the right to depict individuals. Earlier, in 1843, Kuniyoshi had a brush with the authorities over a print that was judged to be a satiric jab at the shogun,³² but as the effects of the Tenpō Reforms later diminished, the artist no doubt felt more comfortable in testing the limits of authority with satiric prints.

Kuniyoshi's playful images may also be read in a broader art historical context as a reaction to a long tradition of depicting human figures in ukiyoe. In producing faces composed of bodies, he reminds us of so many paintings of beautiful women whose faces are expressionless but who acquire a trace of personality when the image is read in the context of the garment-covered body (cat. 279). Kuniyoshi also seems to imply that superficial appearances are a social construction when he has the female subject of one print in the series state, "various people have come together to make up my face." The construction of ideal beauty prints and paintings is no longer the mere reflection of the beauty of an individual woman, nor is it solely the imaginative creation of idealized beauty by a single artist. On the technical level Kuniyoshi may be suggesting that several people collaborated on the creation of a print, and indeed the designer, carver, printer, calligrapher, and publisher each had a significant role in its production. On another level Kuniyoshi may be asserting that it is the public, the people who bought prints, who had an essential role in creating the representation of beauty. Finally, we, as modern viewers, come to the prints and paintings with our own expectations and preconceptions of beauty, and reconstruct the images yet again.

Edo artists experimented with remarkably varied means of depicting the human body and face: the crafted perfection of masks for nō drama or the extreme caricatures of those used for kyōgen, the expressionless but evocative faces of female dancers and courtesans of the early paintings, the bust portraits of Utamaro's women or Sharaku's actors. Artists of the Edo period constantly explored new

cat. 279
 Utagawa Kuniyoshi,
A Young Person Who Looks Old,
 c. 1847–1848,
 color woodblock print,
 approx. 38 x 26 (15 x 10 1/4),
 Private Collection, Hyōgo



modes of portraying human beings at work and at play, relying not on purely naturalistic representations, but rather on more subtle symbolic methods. “Art is something which lies in the slender margin between the real and the unreal,” Chikamatsu instructs us, “while bearing resemblance to the original, it should have stylization; this makes it art, and is what delights men’s minds.” The reader of this volume is similarly encouraged to take delight in the ways that Edo artists balanced reality and stylization to capture images of the men and women who passed their lives in the floating world.

- 1 Translated in Ryusaku Tsunoda et. al., comps., *Sources of Japanese Tradition* (New York, 1964), 1: 439–440. The aesthetic concepts of Chikamatsu in relation to puppet theater (*bunraku*) are discussed in Andrew Gerstle and Sakurai Hiroshi, “Margins between the Real and Unreal: *Bunraku*,” in James R. Brandon et al., *Japanese Theater in the World* (New York, 1997), 59–64.
- 2 Quoted in Christine Guth, *Asobi: Play in the Arts of Japan* (Katonah, N.Y., 1992).
- 3 For a discussion of the variable modes of expression allowed by the *nō* mask, see Günter Zobel and Gotō Hajime, “Snow in a Silver Bowl: *Nō* Theater,” in Brandon et al. 1997, 50–51.
- 4 Cited in Ury Eppstein, “The Stage Observed: Western Attitudes toward Japanese Theater,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 40, no. 2 (1993), 148.
- 5 For a discussion of the role of satire in *kyōgen*, see Hayashi Kazutoshi and Laurence Kominz, “Satire, Parody, and Joyous Laughter: *Kyōgen*” in Brandon et al. 1997; this particular play is discussed on p. 56.
- 6 In a photograph of a modern performance of the *kyōgen* play *Persimmons*, a priest can be seen mimicking the actions of a monkey, plain face; see Carolyn Anne Morley, *Transformation, Miracles, and Mischief: The Mountain Priest Plays of Kyōgen*, Cornell East Asia Series (Ithaca, N.Y., 1993), 22.
- 7 See Jurgis Elisonas, “Notorious Places: A Brief Excursion into the Narrative Topography of Early Edo,” in James L. McClain, John M. Merriman, and Ugawa Kaoru, eds., *Edo and Paris: Urban and the State in the Early Modern Era* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1994), 263.
- 8 Traditional accounts report that the shamisen was introduced from the Ryukyu Islands (Okinawa) into Japan during the 1560s. For a detailed history of the shamisen and its music, see William P. Malm, *Japanese Music and Musical Instruments* (Rutland, Vt., 1959), 185–212.
- 9 Elisonas 1994, 266.
- 10 See Okudaira Shunroku, *Hikone byōbu: Mugengeki no enshutsu* (Tokyo, 1996), 4–5.
- 11 The courtesan population of Yoshiwara has been approximated by scholars consulting the brothel guidebooks of the day. By the second decade of the eighteenth century there were approximately 1,800 to 2,100 prostitutes working in Yoshiwara. By the 1780s there were 2,800 to 2,900. The Kansei Reforms of 1787 to 1793 required that many of the prostitutes working in unlicensed districts move to Yoshiwara, which meant that by the end of the century nearly 5,000 prostitutes were indentured to the bordellos. See Nishiyama Matsunosuke, *Edo Culture: Daily Life and Diversions in Urban Japan, 1600–1868*, trans. and ed., Gerald Groemer (Honolulu, 1997), 60–61. For a detailed cultural history of the Yoshiwara licensed quarters, see Cecilia Segawa Seigle, *Yoshiwara: The Glittering World of the Japanese Courtesan* (Honolulu, 1993).
- 12 Hishikawa Moronobu's influence on his successors is suggested by comparing the views of the activities in and around the covered pleasure boat to a similar scene in a magnificent set of screens by Miyagawa Chōshun in the Worcester (Mass.) Museum of Art. See Elizabeth de Sabato Swinton, ed., *The Women of the Pleasure Quarter: Japanese Paintings and Prints of the Floating World* (New York, 1996), pls. 3 and 4.
- 13 Richard Lane, *Images from the Floating World: The Japanese Print, Including an Illustrated Dictionary of Ukiyo-e* (New York, 1978), 11.
- 14 For a discussion of Moronobu in the context of popular Edo culture, see Joshua S. Mostow, *Pictures of the Heart: The “Hyakunin Isshu” in Word and Image* (Honolulu, 1996), 98–104.
- 15 Tsunoda et al. 1964, 1: 435.
- 16 Tsunoda et al. 1964, 1: 435.
- 17 The Kaigetsudō painters occasionally painted other subjects, including religious icons. See Asano Shūgō, “Kaigetsudō Ando hitsu tatsu bijin zu,” *Kokka* 1183 (1994).
- 18 For a summary of recent scholarship on the subject of *mitate-e*, see Timothy T. Clark, “*Mitate-e*: Some Thoughts, and a Summary of Recent Writings,” *Impressions: The Journal of the Ukiyo-e Society of America*, no. 19 (1997), 6–27.
- 19 For a discussion of the customs surrounding *wakashu* see Paul Gordon Schalow's introduction to his translation of Ihara Saikaku, *The Great Mirror of Male Love* (Stanford, Calif., 1990). Schalow notes: “A *wakashu* was identified essentially on the basis of his long-sleeved robe and hairstyle. . . . At the age of eleven or twelve the crown of a male child's head was shaved, symbolizing the first of three steps towards adulthood. The shaved crown drew attention to the forelocks (*maegami*), the boy's distinguishing feature. At the age of fourteen or fifteen the boy's natural hairline was reshaped by shaving the temples into right angles, but the forelocks remained as *sumi-maegami* (cornered forelocks). . . . The final step, completed at age eighteen or nineteen, involved cutting off the forelocks completely; the pate of his head was shaved smooth, leaving only the sidelocks (*bin*). Once he changed to a robe with rounded sleeves, the boy was recognized as an adult man (*yarō*). He was no longer available as a *wakashu* for sexual relations with adult men like himself but was now qualified to establish a relationship with a *wakashu*” (p. 29).
- 20 For a complete translation with full annotation, see Kuki Shūzō, *Reflections on Japanese Taste: The Structure of Iki*, trans. John Clark, ed. Sakoku Matsui and John Clark (Sydney, Australia, 1997). An enlightening discussion of Kuki's work in a broader intellectual context is found in Leslie Pincus, *Authenticating Culture in Imperial Japan: Kuki Shūzō and the Rise of National Aesthetics* (Berkeley, Calif., 1996).

- 21 Translated in Pincus 1996, 124.
- 22 This print is discussed in greater detail in Timothy Clark, "Utamaro's Portraiture," *The Proceedings of the Japan Society* [London], no. 130 (winter 1997), 2–30.
- 23 A subsequent series, Ten Categories of Female Physiology (*Fujō ninsō juppon*), took up the same theme but did not give specific titles to the personality types. See Shūgō Asano and Timothy Clark, *The Passionate Art of Kitagawa Utamaro* (London, 1995), nos. 61–64.
- 24 The characteristics of the "fancy-free" type are found in a print from another series by Utamaro, entitled A Parent's Moralizing Spectacles, of about 1802. There the artist includes an inscription describing this personality type from the viewpoint of disapproving parents: "She loses her head to each passing fancy. Her feelings are so shallow that she regards her own shadow as if looking in a mirror; and then only with a sideways glance. So there is no reason she would put up for long with any arrangement that did not suit her." Translation by Timothy Clark, in Asano and Clark 1995, 1: no. 395; 2: 229.
- 25 A near contemporary record by one Sasaya Hokyō stated that Sharaku "drew portraits of actors but exaggerated the truth and his pictures lacked form. Therefore he was not well received and after a year or so he ceased to work." Quoted in Harold G. Henderson and Louis V. Ledoux, *Sharaku's Japanese Theater Prints: An Illustrated Guide to His Complete Work* (New York, 1984), 13; see also pp. 15–16.
- 26 For a recent discussion of various issues related to Sharaku, see the essays by Roger Keyes, Nishiyama Matsunosuke, and Suwa Haruo in *Dai Sharaku ten* (Tokyo, 1995).
- 27 See Sebastian Izzard, *Kunisada's World* (New York, 1993), 26.
- 28 An observation made in Izzard 1993, 80.
- 29 The cover of the magazine and Van Gogh's grid sketch are reproduced in Tsukasa Kōdera, "Van Gogh's Utopian Japonisme," in Charlotte van Rappard-Boon et al., *Catalogue of the Van Gogh Museum's Collection of Japanese Prints* (Amsterdam, 1991), 16, figs. 8 and 9.
- 30 For a discussion of Van Gogh's paintings based on these prints, see Kōdera 1991, 13–19.
- 31 For a fascinating history of composite portraits in various cultures, see Pontus Hulten et al., *The Arcimboldo Effect: Transformations of the Face from the 16th to the 20th Century* (New York, 1987).
- 32 See Melinda Takeuchi, "Kuniyoshi's Minamoto Raikō and the Earth Spider: Demons and Protest in Late Tokugawa Japan," *Ars Orientalis* 17 (1987), 5–40.

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Nō mask: Asakura jō (old man)

Seventeenth century
Carved wood, gesso, and pigment
19.7 x 16.2 (7³/₄ x 6³/₈)
Ishikawa Prefectural Museum of Art

211
Nō mask for the play “The Decorated Tree”

Dated 1767
Carved wood, gesso, and pigment
20 x 15 (7⁷/₈ x 5⁷/₈)
Ishikawa Prefectural Museum of Art

• One of the primary categories of nō masks is that of old men (jō). In contrast to masks for female roles, which are generally less expressive, those for male roles are characterized by a slightly overwrought carving style that exaggerates wrinkles and cheekbones to convey the burden or joys of a long life or deeply felt emotions. This mask is typical in its depiction of an old man with a deeply furrowed brow, sunken cheeks, beard, and long white hair that has been braided and tied across a bald pate. Such masks are used to portray an old man, often posing as a boatman or woodcutter, who is actually the spirit of a deceased warrior (*shura*). This type of mask was originally designed by the carver Fukurai (late fourteenth/early fifteenth century), who was sponsored by the Asakura family, one of the powerful daimyo clans of the medieval period. The name of the mask refers to this connection.

The mask of a middle-aged man with mustache (cat. 211) was designed for the protagonist of *The Decorated Tree* (*Nishikigi*), written by the great nō playwright Zeami (1363–1443). In the play an itinerant priest meets a man, who carries a small tree, and a woman. The couple explains to the priest that, by local custom, a man can declare his devotion to a woman by placing a small decorated tree beside the door to her house. By taking the tree inside she signals agreement to his proposal; leaving it outside

means she rejects him. Afterward they all proceed to the burial mound of a man who every day for three years placed a tree outside a woman’s house, to no avail, and died of unrequited love. Suddenly the couple disappears into the burial mound (revealing that the sad story was their own). After praying for the repose of their souls, the priest has a dream in which the man reappears and declares, while performing a felicitous dance, the eternal happiness he has finally found. JTC

212
Nō mask: Zō onna (Zōami-style woman)

Seventeenth century
Carved wood, gesso, and pigment
21 x 13.6 (8¹/₄ x 5³/₈)
Ishikawa Prefectural Museum of Art

Illustrated page 374

213
Nō mask: Manbi (beautiful woman)

Seventeenth century
Carved wood, gesso, and pigment
21.3 x 13.4 (8³/₈ x 5¹/₄)
Tokyo National Museum

• The smooth oval shape and high forehead, with shaved eyebrows and painted-in replacements near the hairline, recall ancient court ideals of beauty and are features of most female masks. The beautiful woman (*manbi*) mask (cat. 213) is slightly more elongated than the classic young woman (*ko omote*) mask and represents a slightly more mature, sensuous expression. Although masks designed for female roles do not convey strong emotion, they were carefully crafted so that subtle nuances could be expressed by tilting a mask up or down: raising the mask into the light can help project a happier mood, while tilting it downward into shadows can convey a more somber, if not grief-stricken, expression.

The *Zō onna*, or “Zōami-style woman,” mask (cat. 212) may be seen as representing quintessential female beauty and is intended to represent a woman in her thirties. She is about

to smile but holds back from revealing deep emotion. The mask’s cool serenity, understated elegance, and dignified bearing are usually reserved for roles of goddesses or heavenly beings such as the divine maiden of *The Feathered Robe* (*Hagoromo*). The name of the mask is derived from its reputed originator, Zōami, a mask carver who lived during the age of the nō actor and playwright Zeami. This example, however, dates to the seventeenth century. JTC

214
Nō mask: Hannya (female demon)

Eighteenth century
Carved wood, gesso, gold, and pigment
25.2 x 16.2 (10 x 6³/₈)
Ishikawa Prefectural Art Museum

215
Nō mask: Hannya (female demon)

Seventeenth century
Carved wood, gesso, gold, and pigment
21.2 x 16.6. (8³/₈ x 6¹/₂)
Tokyo National Museum

Illustrated page 374

• The *Hannya* masks are among the most terrifying in nō drama. Their evil grins and horns capture the vengeful feelings of a woman consumed by jealousy or anger over her husband’s or lover’s betrayal. In contrast to most female masks, in which eyes are rendered in white with black pupils pierced by squarish slits, masks of female demons have larger, round eye openings surrounded by gold. On a candlelit stage, the golden eyes, dimly reflecting the flickering light, must have had an eerie, supernatural effect. *Hannya* masks take their name from the original designer, Hannyabō, a sculptor who lived in the city of Nara during the Muromachi period (1392–1573). JTC



210



211



213



214



216

Surihaku nō robe with dew and snow-covered grass

Eighteenth century

Gold and silver leaf on silk satin

152.5 x 145 (60 x 57 1/8)

Tokyo National Museum

• *Surihaku*, literally “rubbing” and “metallic leaf,” is a technique of decorating cloth in which rice paste is applied to fabric through a stencil and, while the paste is still wet, metallic foil is pressed onto the stenciled-paste pattern. When the paste dries, excess foil is brushed away. The term *surihaku* also refers to *nō* robes decorated by this method.

Surihaku nō robes are worn as inner garments by actors playing female roles and are usually only barely visible at the collar. At times, the upper half of the *surihaku* is exposed when the outer robe, secured at the waist with an *obi*, is draped off the upper body in a style called waist wrap (*koshimaki*). *Surihaku* designs are therefore often limited to the upper half of the garment. Occasionally, however, designs continue to the lower half of the garment. On this robe dense patterning on the upper part stops abruptly in a contour derived from an abstract representation of pine trees (“pine-bark lozenges,” or *matsukawabishi*), then continues in an extremely abbreviated form on the lower skirt.

Crenellated arched lines (resembling abstract snowflake roundels known as *yukiwa*) represent the buildup of dew and snow on blades of grass. The gold- and silver-leafed blades of grass and the dots of dew and snow glisten on the shiny white satin (*shusu*) surface, suggesting the feeling of a cold, melancholy, autumn day. The motif of autumn grasses, which flourish before the first frost of winter, is appropriate. This robe would have been selected for plays with autumnal imagery. SST

217

Atsuita nō robe with poems

Seventeenth century

Gold metallic thread supplementary weft on silk twill

143 x 132.8 (56 1/4 x 52 1/4)

Tokyo National Museum

Illustrated page 375

• The term *atsuita* (thick board) originally referred to imported heavy supplementary weft-patterned fabric wrapped around thick wooden boards to protect them in transit. *Atsuita nō* robes, primarily worn as inner robes by actors playing male roles, are made of cloth that has a design worked into a twill-weave ground of unglossed silk. Both the pattern weft threads and gold threads are secured by the ground warp.

The fabric of this robe is woven in blocks of red and gold that create the effect of a split-body composition known as *katamigawari*. This split-body construction is seen in the early fourteenth-century picture scroll *Miracles of the Deities of Kasuga Shrine* (*Kasuga gongen reiki*), which depicts a male servant wearing a *katamigawari* garment. Later, during the Momoyama period (1573 – 1615), *katamigawari* designs were worn by the upper class.

The woven designs on this robe include six poems from *Japanese and Chinese Poems for Singing* (*Wakan rōeishū*), an anthology compiled about 1013 by Fujiwara no Kintō. Three are from the early spring section, two from the crane section, and one from the red plum section. The calligraphy of the poems is woven in an asymmetrical compositional style known as scattered writing (*chirashigaki*) that was popular in the Nara (710 – 794) and Heian (794 – 1185) periods.

The robe once belonged to the Konparu family of *nō* actors and was in the Teirakusha Collection. SST

218

Nuihaku nō robe with pine tree, checkered pattern, and diagonal stripes

Eighteenth century

Embroidery, gold and silver leaf, and tie-dyeing on silk satin

151 x 136 (59 1/2 x 53 1/2)

Hayashibara Museum of Art, Okayama

• The term *nuihaku*, literally “stitching” and “metallic leaf,” can refer either to a method of decorating a robe with embroidery and metallic leaf or to a *nō* costume decorated with these techniques. *Nuihaku nō* robes are often worn as an inner robe by actors playing women’s roles, but they can occasionally be worn for men’s roles as emperors, courtiers, or children.

In a painterly manner the skillful embroidery (*shishū*) on this *nuihaku nō* robe depicts a stylized pine (a symbol of longevity) resembling the grand pine tree that is painted on the rear wall of the *nō* stage—the Yōgō Pine at the Kasuga Shrine in Nara. Such standing tree motifs (*tachiki*), rising from the hem of a garment, with branches extending to the sleeves, were often seen on eighteenth-century *kosode*. The way this pine tree is interrupted at the waist to accommodate an *obi* was also common.

An allover checkered pattern — canted to harmonize with the bold diagonal stripes tie-dyed in red, blue, and white (*shibori somewake*) — is handsomely rendered in alternating gold and silver leaf. Commonly known in Japan as *ishidatami* (stone pavement), in the mid-Edo period checkered patterns were called *ichimatsu* after the popular kabuki actor Sano-kawa Ichimatsu (1732 – 1762), whose checkered garment became fashionable. Although the characters for the name Ichimatsu mean “market pine,” the word is also a homonym meaning “one pine.” SST





219

Karaori nō robe with pine trees, bamboo, flowering plum branches, and stylized mist

Eighteenth century

Silk and gold metallic thread
supplementary weft patterning on
warp ikat-dyed silk twill

145 x 135.6 (57 ¹/₈ x 53 ³/₈)

Hayashibara Museum of Art, Okayama

• Some Chinese woven fabrics introduced into Japan during the Muromachi period and textiles produced domestically from the beginning of the sixteenth century to imitate them are called Chinese weave, or *karaori*.

This cloth is a heavy fabric of silk and metallic thread supplementary wefts in a silk twill ground. Discontinuous supplementary weft float patterns seem embroidered rather than woven. Kosode made of this cloth, also known as *karaori*, were awarded to *nō* actors by their samurai-class patrons and became a conventional *nō* costume worn primarily as an outer robe for women's roles.

Karaori nō robes incorporating red are considered "colored" (*iroiri*) and are used for young women's roles. This example has an ikat-dyed warp of alternating bands of red and pale indigo. The woven horizontal bands

are accentuated with a pattern of so-called mist shelves created with flat, gold-leafed paper wefts. Stylized mist designs were used as an artistic device in painting to indicate the passage of time, signal a change in scenery, or imply a faraway place. Additional colored weft patterns of pine, bamboo, and plum blossoms symbolize, respectively, longevity, resilience, and regeneration. The plum blossoms and young pine also conjure feelings of early spring. SST

220
Kyōgen mask: *Usobuki* (minor spirit)

Seventeenth century
Carved wood, gesso, and pigment
19.5 x 12.2 (7⁵/₈ x 4³/₄)
Tokyo National Museum

Illustrated page 376

221
Kyōgen mask: *Buaku* (villain)

Seventeenth century
Carved wood
19.1 x 17.5 (7¹/₂ x 6⁷/₈)
Tokyo National Museum

- Kyōgen masks with human features differ from their more refined nō counterparts in that they freeze extreme personal characteristics. In the case of *buaku*, which is both the name of a kyōgen play and a type of mask (cat. 221), the comic villain is shown with fierce features so exaggerated that they become facetious. His eyes droop in failure; the deeply carved lines of his cheeks and forehead convey not strength but weariness; the pronounced overbite adds to the goofy effect.

The comic features of the *usobuki* mask (cat. 220) — bulbous nose, goggling eyes, and pursed lips — were well suited for depicting humorous roles of minor spirits, such as the mosquito spirit in *Sumo Wrestling with a Mosquito* (*Ka zumo*). The word *usobuki* has connotations of “feigning ignorance,” but probably meant “to let out a long breath for no particular purpose.” This figure indeed seems to be letting out an involuntary gasp as he ponders his present, no doubt preposterous, predicament. JTC

222
Kyōgen mask: *Saru* (monkey)

Seventeenth century
Carved wood, gesso, and pigment
18.3 x 14.5 (7¹/₄ x 5³/₄)
Tokyo National Museum

223
Kyōgen mask: *Onna zaru* (female monkey)

Seventeenth century
Carved wood, gesso, and pigment
18.7 x 14.4 (7³/₈ x 5⁵/₈)
Tokyo National Museum

- During the Edo period kyōgen often used masks for animal roles, especially foxes, badgers, monkeys, and dogs — animals that share personality traits with the humans wearing the masks. Monkey (*saru*) masks were among the first to be designed, no doubt because they are so perfect for capturing human expressions. The example of the male monkey (cat. 222) looks as if he has just bitten a sour persimmon, while his female counterpart (cat. 223) has a more passive expression that could be transformed by the simian mimicry of an actor. Monkey masks were worn in various kyōgen plays but were also used in the nō play *Arashiyama*, in which an entire family of monkeys, including a son and daughter, appear on stage. JTC



221



222



223



224
*Kataginu kyōgen costume with reeds
 and sailboat masts*

Nineteenth century
 Paste-resist dyeing and ink on
 plain-weave hemp
 75.4 x 65.5 (29⁵/₈ x 25³/₄)
 Eisei Bunko Foundation, Tokyo

• *Kataginu*, literally “shoulder robes,” are sleeveless garments worn by *kyōgen* actors playing common people such as servants and thieves. These costumes were made from plain-woven hemp (*asa*), the same type of cloth used for commoners’ clothing until cotton, introduced into Japan in the fifteenth century, became widespread. Simple realistic designs typically cover the entire back of the *kataginu* and are hand-drawn or

dyed rather than woven. This *kata-ginu* has paste-resist reeds with inked details, four sailboat masts rising up from waves, and irregular geometric patterns perhaps representing stone pavement. These elements can also be found on an eighteenth-century *yūzenzome kosode* with *Tale of Genji* designs in the collection of the Marubeni Corporation. SST



225
Kataginu kyōgen costume with radish and mallet

Nineteenth century
Paste-resist dyeing on plain-weave hemp
74 x 68.2 (29¹/₈ x 26⁷/₈)
Eisei Bunko Foundation, Tokyo

• The oversized radish (*daikon*) and wooden mallet that crowd the back of this kyōgen robe are attributes of Daikokuten, one of the seven gods of good fortune. Originally a guardian deity in the pantheon of esoteric Buddhism, by the Edo period Daikokuten was widely revered by townspeople as a bestower of wealth and happiness. Images of the deity were ubiquitous in Edo visual culture. For example, Daikokuten is the subject of a boldly carved wood sculpture by Mokujiki Byakudō (cat. 133) and is represented in a parodic woodblock design by Harunobu in which the corpulent male deity is transformed into a svelte young woman (cat. 247). Although neither the sculpture nor the print follow traditional iconography, and the kyogen robe seen here does not explicitly portray the god, the presence of the radish and mallet motifs in each of these works in varying media confirms the allusion to Daikokuten. Similarly, the two-legged radish (*futamata daikon*), a good luck symbol, was often featured in Edo-period images of Daikokuten.

The radish design on this kyōgen costume might be further explained by the saying “ne ga haru,” which has two meanings: “the root sticks (or pushes) out” and “the sound spreads out,” or reverberates. Daikon and turnips commonly decorate drums in hopes that good sounds will emanate from the instrument, and the radish here may similarly express the wish that the voice of the actor (that is, his acting) will flourish. JTC / SST

226
Kataginu kyōgen costume with oxcart wheels and morning glories

Nineteenth century
Ink and color on plain-weave hemp
78.4 x 62.1 (30⁷/₈ x 24¹/₂)
Eisei Bunko Foundation, Tokyo

• Referring to ox-drawn carts that transported aristocrats during the Heian period, motifs like those seen on this kataginu were first used in the late Heian period. Often called the Genji wheel, in reference to the prince in the *Tale of Genji*, this pattern became popular during the Muro-machi period. Wheels were sometimes depicted half submerged, reflecting the practice of periodically placing them in water to prevent the wood from drying out and warping. Such motifs can be found on the garment worn by a laborer depicted in the early fourteenth-century scrolls *Miracles of the Deities of Kasuga Shrine* (*Kasuga Gongen reigen-ki*).

The diagonal placement of the two partial wheels on the back of this kataginu is accentuated by the delicate line of the morning glory tendril that connects them. This unusual depiction of wheels entwined with vines suggests disuse and decay. SST

227
Kataginu kyōgen costume with waterfall and cherry blossoms

Nineteenth century
Paste-resist dyeing and pigment on plain-weave hemp
78.5 x 65.5 (30⁷/₈ x 25³/₄)
Eisei Bunko Foundation, Tokyo

• Cherry blossoms, the quintessential Japanese symbol for spring, are scattered across this kataginu. Thin vertical lines suggest a waterfall, or perhaps a spring rain that causes the demise of the blossoms. These lines accentuate the illusion that the blossoms are falling into the foaming waves depicted at the hem. Cherry blossoms, beloved by the Japanese for their transient beauty, were particularly favored by the samurai. SST



228
Kabuki costume with target and arrows

Nineteenth century
Silk and metallic thread embroidered
appliqués with ink on silk satin
110 x 131 (43 1/4 x 51 5/8)
Tokyo National Museum

• Like most kabuki costumes, this ensemble incorporates a bold design. A large arrow-pierced target is strategically placed on the back of the three-quarter-length coat, or *haori*. Two additional arrows cross over the front and extend to the lower back. Embroidered in silk and metallic thread, the motifs were appliquéd to the garment after it was constructed. Ink was brushed on the embroidered white silk to enhance the depiction of the feathered ends of the arrow shaft.

Both the *haori* and the inner robe, or *kitsuke*, are made of soft green silk satin and are thickly padded with silk wadding. While the *kitsuke* is constructed like a traditional *kosode*, the *haori* has no center-back seam and includes gussets at the side seams. The unusually wide measurement of the silk satin, more than 62.2 centimeters across the *haori*'s back body panel, suggests that the fabric might have been woven in China.

Three identical gold-metallic embroidered family crests are appliquéd to the back of the *kitsuke*, one on each sleeve and one on the center back seam just below the neckband. The circular crests, each composed of three Japanese gingerroots (*myōga*), identify the garment as belonging to Bandō Mitsue, the leader of a female kabuki troupe that performed in the innermost palace, where daimyo family women resided. This costume was worn when she performed the five-act historical drama *A Simple Chronicle of the Rise of Genji and Fall of Heike* (*Hirakana Seisui*) for the wife of shogun Tokugawa Ienari. SST

229
Kabuki costume with dragon, clouds, mountains, and waves

Nineteenth century
Silk and metallic thread embroidered
appliqués, wool appliqués, silk
and metallic thread embroidery, and
pigment on plain-weave wool
147 x 138 (57 7/8 x 54 3/8)
Tokyo National Museum

• This two-piece kabuki costume was made from imported wool fabric known in Japan as *gorofukeren*, from the Dutch term *Grof grain*. The fabric was woven in wider pieces than Japanese-made fabrics. Traditional garments sewn from cloth woven in Japan typically have center back seams, but this costume does not.

Stylized waves, mountains, and clouds embellish both garments. The overlapping stylized waves are composed of appliquéd dark indigo blue wool, painted light blue pigment, and couched silk embroidery thread. The more realistic waves are outlined with silk thread and filled with couched gold metallic thread. Silk and metallic embroidery thread also delineate the clouds as well as the columnlike mountains rising from the waves. The mountains probably allude to the mythical Isle of the Immortals, a symbol of eternal youth.

A large appliqué of a flying dragon with bulging glass eyes and metal teeth is placed across the upper back of the *haori*. The beast is elaborately embroidered and has patches of appliquéd fabric, including red wool for the tongue. A raised embroidery technique known as *takanui* was used to depict the gold nose, whiskers, forehead, and horns of the dragon.

This costume belonged to the female kabuki actor Bandō Mitsue and was used for the role of Kudō Suketsune. It was worn during a performance at the Hama Detached Palace in 1870 on the occasion of an official visit by Britain's Prince Alfred. SST





229

413

ENTERTAINMENT • CATALOGUE 210 - 281



230

*Juban kabuki costume with pine
and feathered robe design*

Nineteenth century
Silk and gold metallic thread
embroidery on silk crepe
46.9 x 127.2 (18 1/2 x 50 1/8)
Tokyo National Museum

• Several onstage costume change techniques are used in kabuki, including one known as *hadanugi* (bare to the waist). In this method a layer of clothing is quickly removed from an actor by a stage assistant, dramatically revealing another garment. The newly exposed undergarment (*juban*) is usually of a different color and/or design, signaling a transformation in the character's role. Occasionally costumes are pulled off and added in rapid succession.

The embroidered design on this garment, which belonged to Bandō Mitsue, is based on a well-known

nō play, *Hagoromo* (*The Feathered Robe*). The play tells the legend of a fisherman who finds a beautiful robe of feathers hanging on a branch of a pine tree on the beach at Matsubara in Miho. An angel appears and tearfully pleads for her robe because she cannot ascend to heaven. The fisherman agrees to return it, and the appreciative heavenly maiden dances for him before flying to heaven. *Hagoromo*, the legend and *nō* play, also influenced kabuki dances dating back to 1745. SST

231
Amusements along the Riverside at Shijō

Late 1620s
Pair of two-panel screens;
ink, color, and gold on paper
Each 164.4 x 172.8 (64 3/4 x 68)
The Seikado Foundation, Tokyo
Important Cultural Property

• From ancient through early modern times, the dry riverbed area of the Kamo River in Kyoto, near the intersection of Shijō (Fourth Avenue), was a popular gathering place for entertainers of every ilk who catered to the masses of the capital. The river, here rendered abstractly in sinuous curves of blue, flows north to south through the eastern half of the city, but it was reduced to an easily waded stream during the summer and fall. Since no permanent structures could be built there, the dry riverbed and riverbanks were unclaimed, untaxed, and unregulated property. The area became a magnet for social outcasts, which during this age included actors and dancers who, despite their great popularity, were linked with prostitution. The riverside thus served as an area where class and gender relations were put aside and people of all classes could escape the drudgery of daily life.

On both sides of the avenue various entertainments are being held. Kabuki stages and booths with spectacles of every variety stand chockablock along the roadway, as crowds of eager spectators take in all the sights. The focus of each screen is a performance of women's kabuki held on a temporary roofed stage. On the right screen the red banner with Mount Fuji motifs proudly announces the "Grand Kabuki from Sadoshima

of the Floating World." In the middle of the stage we see a pair of female performers (a third is unseen here) playing the shamisen. Sitting in chairs covered with exotic tiger and leopard skins, both women are flamboyantly dressed and have long swords at their sides. The smaller signboard beneath the large banner indicates they are high-ranking courtesans, or tayū, of the Sadoshima bordello. Seated on a brilliant red carpet to their side are other young female performers. Many of the "women who play" (yūjo) performing on stage were certainly prostitutes, but this should not prejudice us from granting them full credit for skilled performances.

Other spectacles along Shijō cater to curiosity seekers. In the lower right corner of the right screen a giant woman sits inert while a pitchman points out this amazing sight to gasping spectators. In the neighboring stall a dog decked out in miniature court cap and costume does an auspicious *sanbasō* dance, while its canine accomplice leaps through a hoop held by a man in an exotic Portuguese high hat and pantaloons. In the next stall to the left a juggler balances a bowl on a stick with his chin. The final stall, in the lower left corner of the right screen, shows a delightful scene of flautists playing long bamboo flutes, their heads hidden by extravagant boxlike curtained hats festooned with artificial flowers.

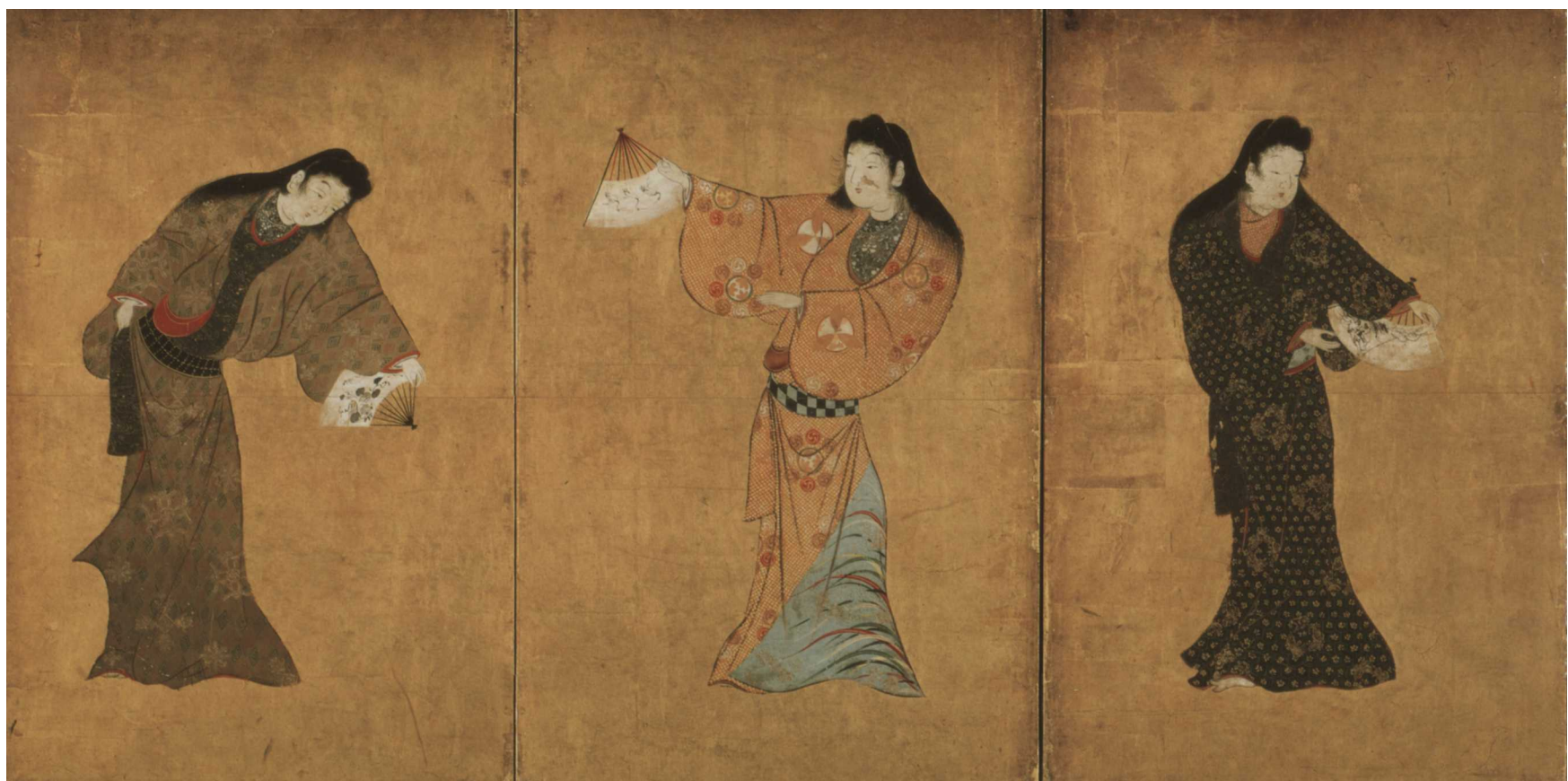
Directly across the street a picture signboard announces the sideshow of a porcupine. Normally a nocturnal animal, the caged porcupine, already irritable at being kept awake, is further provoked by the man poking him with a stick — its quills are shown standing on end, mimicking the sign at the entrance.

The main attraction of the day is the spectacular performance of women's kabuki in the roofed stage shown in the left screen. Above the "mouse-wicket" entrance the banner with Chinese bellflower motif announces that this is the Dōgiza troupe of female performers, headed by a courtesan of tayū rank. The rambunctious crowd includes people of all ages and walks of life. Young women's kabuki was outlawed by the authorities in 1629 because its link to prostitution was thought to be injurious to public morals, not to mention that samurai were getting in unseemly fights over their favorite performers. Though officially banned, women's kabuki is seen in surviving genre paintings, seeming to indicate that it was still occasionally performed through the early 1640s.

This pair of screens was probably created sometime during the late 1620s by a townsman painter with training in traditional Kano or Tosa academic techniques. JTC







232

Dancers

Late 1620s – 1630s

Six-panel screen; ink, color, and gold on paper

63.3 x 240 (24⁷/₈ x 94¹/₂)

Kyoto City

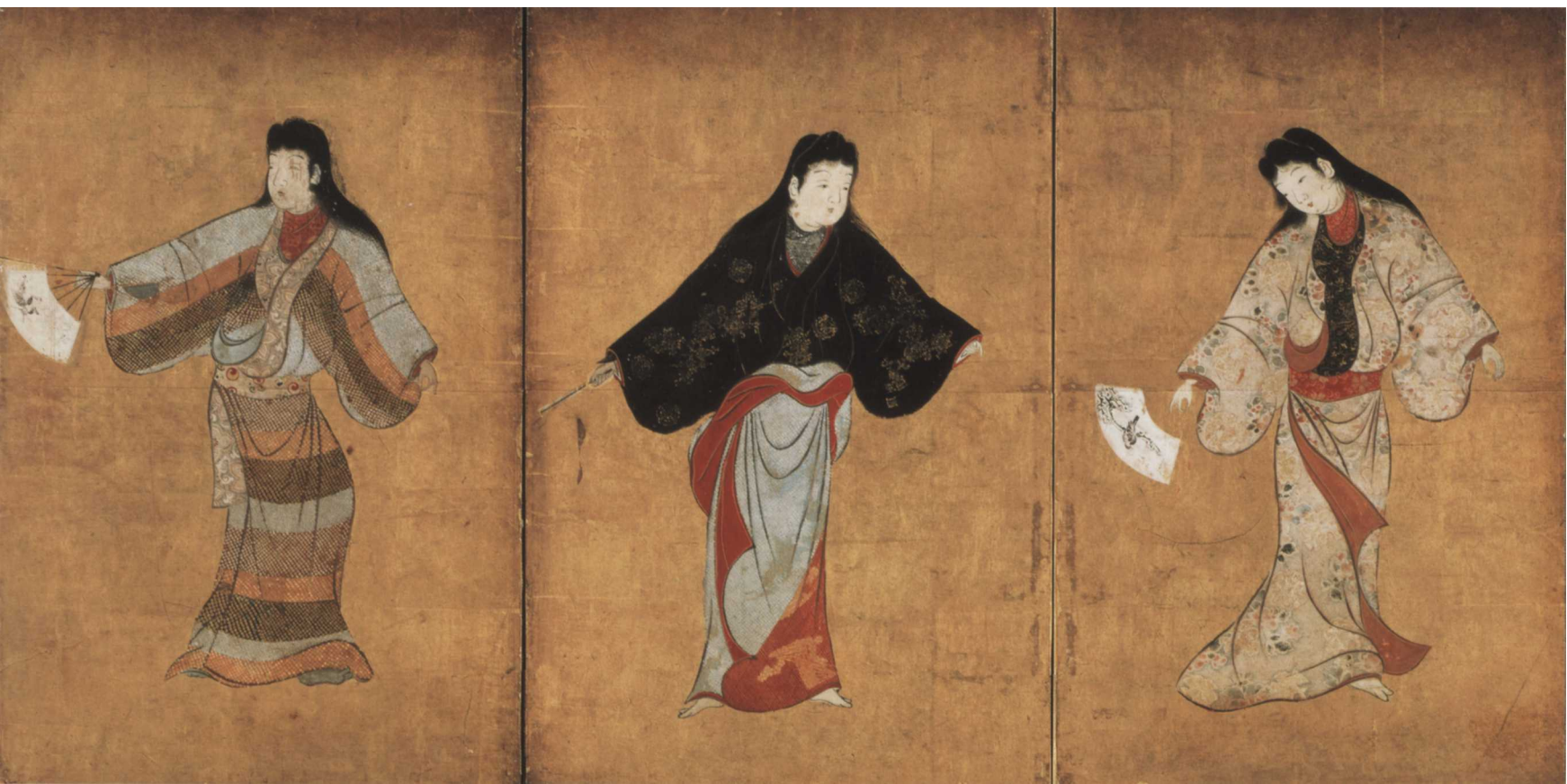
Important Cultural Property

• A single dancer delicately balances a fan against an undiluted golden ground on each of the six panels of this small folding screen. The figures may represent performers for women's kabuki as described in the previous entry, or simply courtesans doing fan dances in a bordello. The absence of a setting makes it impossible to say. The meticulously delineated robes and the frozen, highly formalized poses suggest a decorative intention, but the figures are not mere mannequins. In each case the artist experimented with a subtle variation of the physical equilibrium sought by a live dancer. The extended hands and the bending or twisting of the upper torso create a temporary imbalance, but the bend of the legs compensates for

the shifting weight. Within the glamorous folds of the robes, a carefully thought out figural structure can be detected.

The large ten-ribbed folding fans that each performer holds are of a variety specifically designed for dance. The adroit manipulation of a fan marked a talented dancer, who used it to suggest an umbrella, falling flower petals, a sliding door, or, shut, even a rope to save a drowning person.

The finely detailed flower-and-bird images on the fans suggest a painter trained in traditional Kano academic modes. This screen was probably one of a pair. JTC







233
Hikone Screen

c. 1620s – 1640s
Six panels (originally connected in screen format); ink, color, and gold on paper
Assembled 94.6 x 274.8 (37¹/₄ x 108¹/₈)
Hikone Castle Museum, Shiga
National Treasure

• Against a background of brilliant gold leaf and, in the leftmost two panels, a six-panel landscape screen, we spy on fifteen denizens of a demi-monde setting in early seventeenth-century Kyoto. While its themes hark back to traditional painting, this work anticipates developments in genre painting in which backgrounds would completely disappear and images of women would be presented in dramatic robes but with masklike, almost expressionless faces. The brushwork is impressive, not only in the compulsively meticulous rendering of the landscape screen within a screen, but also in the careful delineation of details in the textile designs. Beyond the technical finesse, the screen intriguingly captures the irony of people who are supposed to be indulging in playful pastimes but seem to be caught in a limbo of frustrated desires.

Since there are few hints of a specific setting, interior is easily confused with exterior, but the clothes, poses, and leisurely pursuits shown on the left four panels suggest an interior bordello scene, the right two panels perhaps a setting just outside. On the right a courtesan (with freshly washed hair?) in pale blue robes with a torn banana leaf motif enters the scene, accompanied by a young apprentice carrying a sprig of camellia blossoms. They approach a young samurai leaning provocatively on his long sword. Oblivious to her companions, another courtesan glances at her pet dog.

In the central panels a young woman writes letters or poems on long sheets of paper, while behind her a courtesan's youthful apprentice (*kamuro*) gestures to the right. Another courtesan leans pensively on an armrest with a letter dangling in one hand. Behind her a male client reads what we may assume to be a love letter from a paramour.

The activities of the figures in the left three panels of the screen allude to the elements of the Chinese painting theme of the Four Accomplishments or Four Leisurely Pursuits: the koto or zither (Chinese: *qin*), go, calligraphy, and painting. Here, instead of the traditional Chinese references, we discover men and women enjoying the shamisen, *sugoroku* (a backgammon-like game, see cat. 244), love letters, and a painting within a painting. In front of the Chinese-style screen a young samurai and two women banter over a game of *sugoroku*. The woman looking on, whose hair is arranged in a magnificent *hyôgo mage* style, uses the edge of her underrobe to hide a giggle or smile. A blind minstrel strums on a shamisen, the three-stringed instrument associated with kabuki and the pleasure quarters beginning around 1610. To the left is a young female geisha playing a shamisen, head bowed; we cannot see her face, but infer her beauty from the long strand of hair, tied with a simple ribbon. In the foreground a young apprentice kneels with tea cup in hand, serving her master. A male geisha also plays a shamisen.

The six panels of the *Hikone Screen* were once connected (and perhaps even originally formed part of a larger set of screens), but are now separated for conservation purposes. The screen's name derives from the Hikone fief, which was controlled by daimyo of the Ii family in whose possession the screen remained until recently. JTC





234

The Rope Curtain

c. 1640s

Two-panel folding screen

(left panel added at later date); ink,

color, and gold on paper

159.7 x 180.6 (62⁷/₈ x 71¹/₈)

The Arc-en-Ciel Foundation, Tokyo

Important Cultural Property

Illustrated page 379

- A courtesan gently parts the rope curtain at a bordello entrance, lingering quietly after having bid farewell to a patron. The courtesan's pet dog, animated and yelping, draws attention to her silent brooding. The elegance of the woman's garments, decorated with trailing strands of flowering wisteria against stylized waves, her dramatic hyōgo mage coiffure, and her stately presence suggest she is a tayū, the highest rank of courtesan of the Kyoto pleasure quarters. Her left hand is tucked into her sleeve, a convention found in numerous examples of bijin (beautiful woman) paintings of this period. The entire scene is suffused with an aura of quiet dispassion.

The unsigned painting is the work of highly skilled town painter. Its emphasis on the figure rather than the setting anticipates developments in ukiyoe tradition. The left panel, consisting of nothing but a bamboo curtain (*sudare*), was added at a later date. Both panels make allusion to visual screens that obscure vision, but only partly. Numerous passages in classical Japanese literature record accounts of men peering through bamboo shades, gaps in hedges, and cracks in sliding doors. Through the depiction of penetrable barriers a voyeuristic aesthetic is suggested, and the erotic innuendo intensified. JTC



235

Whose Sleeves?

Early seventeenth century

Two-panel screen; ink, color, and

gold on paper

149.5 x 162 (58⁷/₈ x 63³/₄)

Private Collection, Kyoto

236

Whose Sleeves?

Middle to late seventeenth century

Two six-panel screens; ink, color,

and gold on paper

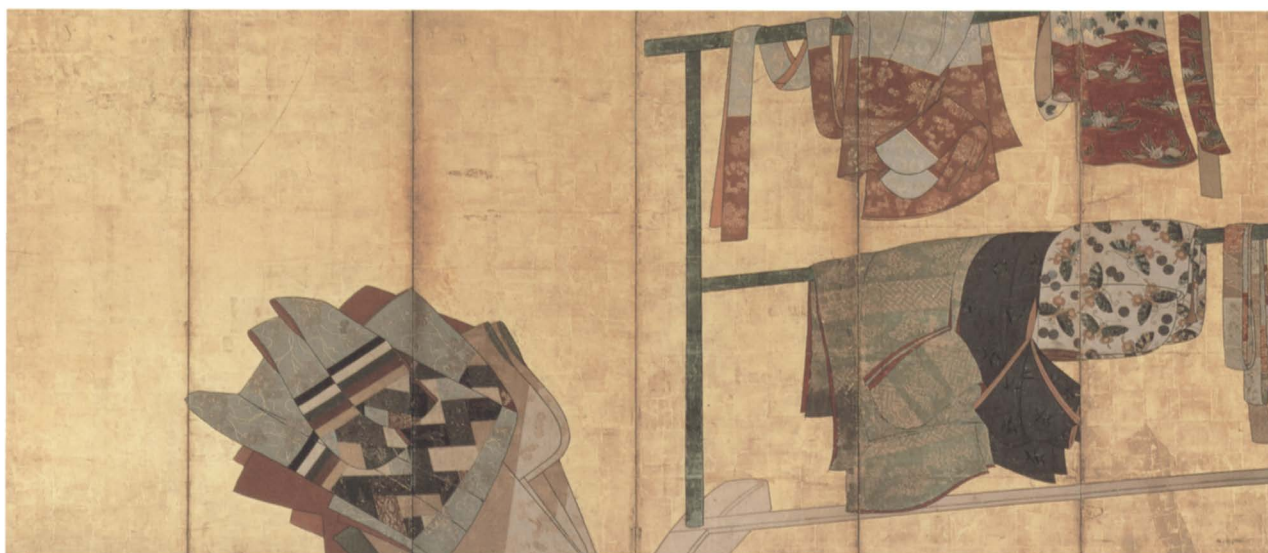
Each 149 x 347.8 (58⁵/₈ x 137)

Mitsui Bunko, Tokyo

- Screens on the poetic theme “whose sleeves?” (*tagasode*), showing colorful garments draped nonchalantly over racks, their wearers nowhere to be seen, became extremely popular during the Momoyama period and were produced in great numbers through the late seventeenth century. The beauty of courtesans, the playful dalliance of men and women, and erotic sentiments are subtly suggested by omission in such paintings.

Fine robes had always been an important accoutrement of Japanese aristocratic culture, but during the early modern period — an era when many status symbols were still denied to members of the merchant class — the nouveaux riches expended much money on robes. Images of elegant robes played on the vanity associated with ostentatious fashion.

Poems on the theme of “whose sleeves?” can be traced to the Heian court, where the language of garments was fraught with social, political, and personal significance. Novels such as the early eleventh-century *Tale of Genji* describe how the arrangement of the multiple layers of a woman's court dress could convey her aesthetic sophistication, color sense, and even amorous potential (more so than her face, which might have remained hidden by a curtain or screen). Lovers exchanged *waka*, thirty-one syllable court poems, on the topic of “whose sleeves?” which connoted an erotic encounter or



the image of a beautiful woman who remains inaccessible, though her presence might be suggested by her incense-scented robes.

Seventeenth-century paintings of people on picnics or in bordellos often featured vignettes of garments draped over racks while their owners partook of leisurely pursuits. And garment racks draped with elegant robes were sometimes used to create a smaller, more intimate space in a larger room of a residence.

Although screens such as these may convey a flat, completely static impression in reproduction, in fact they make effective use of the folding-screen format to add a sense

of fullness to the garments. The play of the actual folding of the screen against the highly stylized folding of the fictive robes draws attention to a fundamental metaphors of folding and unfolding, dressing and undressing. The gold backgrounds help to set off the elaborate textile patterns while adding to the feeling of luxury and wealth. The two-panel screen shown here (cat. 235) is unusual not only in format but in its composition, which includes a background of sliding paper panels rather than a plain gold field. Screens with similar compositions in the usual six-panel format survive in the collections of the

Nezu Institute of Fine Arts and Hon-nōji, suggesting that this screen may have originally included four other panels.

Each of the two screens from the Mit-sui Bunko collection (cat. 236) was apparently the left screen of a pair, or perhaps each was simply designed to stand alone. Comparison of the images demonstrates how painting workshops would follow set compositional formulas while changing only the decoration of the fabrics. Compared with earlier seventeenth-century examples in the tradition, the less minute detail and the use of single-colored robes in these screens seem to indicate a date later in the century. JTC

舞





237
Itinerant Entertainers

Late seventeenth or early
eighteenth century
Pair of six-panel screens; ink,
color, and gold on paper
Each 60 x 206 (23⁵/₈ x 81¹/₈)
Preservation Committee of Oba
Local Governor's Office, Tokyo

• Through breaks in billowing clouds of gold we peer into lively scenes of street performers, religious solicitors, and ambulant entertainers of every variety, some still on the road, others pausing at entrances to private houses where they might collect a coin or two for their efforts. Despite the pious purport of the chanters and dancers, they sought to induce pleasure as much as to convert souls, and like performers on street corners or subways of our own day, they relied on donations from spectators to make ends meet. Whatever their motives, collectively their presence added much to the vibrant drama of daily life in urban centers of early modern Japan.

Screens of this type, as much documentary as aesthetic in their intent, hark back to conventionalized genre paintings of annual festivals (*nenjū gyōjie*), which depicted the court ceremonies performed regularly each year. Though many of the activities shown here could take place at any time of year, the artist attempted to give some sense of seasonal progression. For instance, the scene of comic dialogue (*manzai*) performers in the upper right corner of the right screen is associated with the New Year's season. The scene of a poor man collecting old temple shrine charms in the lower left corner of the left screen took place at year's end.

Among the entertainers on the right screen are a man in a whiskered blackface mask, representing the deity of good luck, Daikokuten (second panel from right), and the lively lion dancers performing an exorcism dance of the New Year (see detail p. 371). The right screen also includes a wide variety of itinerant priests and nuns: a street preacher giving a sermon under an umbrella (second panel), a priest with a picture of a bronze temple bell collecting alms (fifth panel), and a contingent of six priests chanting homage to the Buddha's name (leftmost panel).

The left screen similarly captures an array of religious and secular performers, including jugglers and puppeteers, musicians and dancers. The men in flamboyant hats doing a lively jig are taking part in a folk dance to pray for a good harvest (see detail facing page). The blind men and women with canes are itinerant storytellers or lute players (lower section of fourth and fifth panels), a reminder that blind chanters played a crucial role in the preservation of Japanese national literature and legend until literacy became widespread in the late Edo period. JTC





238
Attributed to Hishikawa Moronobu
(c. 1618 – 1694)
Kabuki at the Nakamura Theater

c. 1690
Pair of six-panel screens; ink, color,
and gold on paper
Each 170 x 397 (67 x 156 1/4)
Tokyo National Museum
Important Art Object

239
Attributed to Hishikawa Moronobu
(c. 1618 – 1694)
Kabuki at the Nakamura Theater;
Cherry Blossom Viewing at Ueno

c. 1690
Pair of six-panel screens; ink, color,
and gold on paper
Each 82 x 225 (32 1/4 x 88 1/2)
Suntory Museum of Art, Tokyo

• Kabuki flourished in both Kyoto and Edo during the final decade of the seventeenth century, to which these two sets of screens can be dated. Both sets show views of Edo’s Nakamura Theater, its dressing rooms, and nearby facilities for entertaining patrons. The left screen of the Suntory Museum version (cat. 239) shows people enjoying the dancing and drinking parties that accompany cherry blossom viewing in the Ueno district even to this day.

In the right screen of both sets of paintings crowds mill outside the entrance to the theater as barkers announce the day’s performances listed on the playbills. Customers straddle the raised sill of the mouse-wicket entrance, designed to prevent gate crashers. Inside the theater we see what might be members of a daimyo household in boxes to the left. The majority of the playgoers must be content to sit on the uncovered ground surrounding the stage. On stage is a troupe of wakashu, young male kabuki actors, dressed in male and female costumes. It seems as though we have entered the theater at a high point of a performance, when the main actors are still on stage and a line of colorful dancers enters. At center stage on the left musicians strum shamisen and pound drums.

The left screen of the Tokyo National Museum version (cat. 238) gives a detailed view of the dressing rooms and male bordello attached to the theater. In the three left panels we enter a preserve of male pleasure making. The homosocial aspect of the scene is conspicuous. Men of all ages are engaged in talking, drinking, and game playing. In the teahouse wakashu cavort with older male patrons — entertaining them with shamisen and dances. A samurai plays *shōgi* (Japanese checkers) with a young male companion, while other boys look on; another patron receives a back rub from a blind masseur (see facing page). In the foreground garden a drinking party is under way with older men of the merchant class being entertained by a group of boys.

The Nakamura Theater, which opened in 1624, was the first of the great Edo kabuki theaters to be licensed. Originally called the Saruwaka Theater, it was rebuilt on different spots and the hereditary license was handed down from generation to generation until 1893. Both of these screen pairs show a view of the Nakamura no earlier than 1690, the year its emblem was changed to the ginkgo leaf crest seen on the banner of the drum tower.

The left screen of the Suntory pair, showing people enjoying cherry blossoms, is nearly identical to a screen on the same theme in the Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution. JTC







434



240
Hishikawa Moronobu (c. 1618 – 1694)
Scenes of Daily Life in Edo

Early 1690s
Two handscrolls; ink and color on silk
34.4 x 423.3 (13¹/₂ x 166⁵/₈); and
34.4 x 419 (13¹/₂ x 165)
Idemitsu Museum of Arts, Tokyo

• This set of brightly colored scrolls captures the soul of townspeople at leisure. Life is uncomplicated; people get along with one another; their pursuits are in harmony with nature. The first scroll, which progresses from spring into summer, shows people at work and play in pleasant surroundings near the river and in open areas of the city. The second scroll, set in autumn and winter, depicts people in procession to and inside the Yoshiwara pleasure quarters of Edo.

The artist seems to have consciously balanced the gender emphasis of each scroll. The first concludes with a decidedly homosocial aspect, showing an elaborate male gathering of older samurai ministered to by teenage male companions (wakashu) and male geisha. The second scroll traces the progress of a samurai to the Yoshiwara pleasure quarters and ends up inside a house of assignation, or *ageya*, where men pursue heterosexual pleasures.

The first scroll opens in the workaday world with a scene of a fan maker's shop and the sight of a barrel maker hard at work. As the scroll is unfurled, we come to a pine tree marking a transition to the next scene and a cherry tree in full bloom, indicating that we have moved from mundane life into a realm of pleasure. The bridge, guarded by a willow — ubiquitous symbol of budding sexuality in uki-yoe — demarcates the entry into the world of erotic play. The bridge crosses into the “floating world” of earthly pleasure whose symbol is water, a unifying theme of both scrolls. One's first encounter in this world is the elaborately dressed wakashu, who makes his living variously as a stage performer and as a male prostitute; behind him is his trusted manservant (*kongō*). Crossing the bridge in the opposite direction is a middle-aged samurai with a female attendant and porter; we may assume they are with the troupe of dancers just ahead.

The female dancers are on their way to a lavish cherry-blossom viewing party, where people are entertained by the koto, shamisen, drums, and flutes. The next scene segues into a panoramic view of pleasure seekers enjoying an outing on the Sumida River. Inside the boat groups separated by gender listen to music or watch a go match while indulging in sake and snacks. In the final scene of the scroll, back on shore, merry-makers dance in a large circle around a hanging lantern (see facing page). Several figures are dressed in feminine attire, but we may safely infer that this is an all-male function. Seated on mats, the wakashu and male geisha take care of older men. The lantern suggests that evening has arrived.

Opening with a drastic shift in view-point, the next scroll presents a lonely landscape scene of the banks of the Sumida River and the San'ya Canal, the water route to Yoshiwara. To reach Yoshiwara one had to go by boat, horse, palanquin, or take a very long, tiring walk along the Dike of Japan, as some are shown doing here.

Suddenly the viewer is placed on the main street of Yoshiwara, known as the Nakanochō. Courtesans encamped in latticed parlors try to attract clients; at an entrance samurai negotiate with the madam. The final scene enters the large room of the *ageya* where patrons are entertained. One customer to the right is served sake and cajoled by male and female companions; another customer is serenaded by a geisha with a shamisen. The cluster of patrons and female companions around a hibachi is a reminder that winter has arrived. To the left a samurai lounges under a quilt, while a courtesan and her young apprentice keep him company (see facing page). JTC



241
 Hanabusa Itchō (1652 – 1724)
Scenes of the Yoshiwara Pleasure Quarter

c. 1703
 Handscroll; ink and color on paper
 39.7 x 135 (15⁵/₈ x 53¹/₈)
 Suntory Museum of Art, Tokyo

- This handscroll captures five scenes from a day in the life of courtesans and clients in the Yoshiwara pleasure quarters. In the first a samurai and a companion, both incognito, are ferried in a “boar’s tusk” boat to the dock

at San’ya Canal. The second and third scenes are set on the main street of Yoshiwara and show courtesans awaiting customers in open-latticed parlors. Then bustling food preparation in the bordello kitchen is contrasted with the languor of courtesans in the next room, as they read letters, adjust their hair, or re-tie an obi (see above). Evening has arrived in the closing scene, and a bird’s-eye view of the courtesans’ private rooms is

juxtaposed with softly outlined silhouettes of figures against the paper sliding panels.

Each scene was originally painted on a separate sheet of paper, but mounting them in handscroll format seems to have been Itchō’s own idea; his colophon indicates that he made the scroll at the behest of a close acquaintance. An inscription at the end of the handscroll suggests that the artist created these images from memory after he had been exiled from the



Eastern Capital. Another inscription (not in the artist's hand) states that mounting was finished by 1703.

Itchō had been banished from Edo in 1698 as punishment for depicting a *shirabyōshi* dancer in a boat, which was construed as a parody of the concubine of the fifth Tokugawa shogun, Tsunayoshi, who is said to have enjoyed riding in pleasure boats. That image was widely reproduced by other artists and became a popular pictorial theme of later ukiyoe artists.

After painting in Miyake Island (Miyakejima) for nearly a decade under the moniker "Islander Itchō," he was allowed to return to Edo in 1709.

Itchō's work may be viewed as a hybrid of traditional Kano-style painting and ukiyoe. His careful brushwork, conservative vision, and serene tastefulness betray his academic training, while his choice of subjects, coloristic daring, and cheerful tone align him with ukiyoe artists. He received early train-

ing in the Kano atelier — under the powerful Yasunobu, who worked for both shogun and emperor — but apparently was soon dismissed for failing to toe the artistic line. He is recognized as the head of the Hanabusa school of painting, and woodblock-printed reproductions of his sketchbooks and drawing instruction manuals — published late in the eighteenth century, decades after his death — had a broad influence on artists of all schools. JTC



242

Kaigetsudō Dohan
(active early eighteenth century)
Standing Courtesan

c. 1705 – 1715

Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk
93.1 x 42.3 (36⁵/₈ x 16⁵/₈)

Tokyo National Museum

- A stately courtesan, wrapped in layers of colorful robes with her obi tied in front, stands out against a perfectly blank background. Her statuesque pose, with an ever-so-slight suggestion of contrapposto, is characteristic of Kaigetsudō painters. Shown in three-quarter profile, she peers mysteriously into the distance. Her hair, combed straight back and gently cascading over her shoulders, is held in place with a single tortoiseshell comb and tied in back with a white ribbon. The eye is drawn at first, however, not to her face but to the bright azurite blue designs of aoi leaves and blossoms on the outer robe; such meticulous attention to textile designs was another hallmark of the Kaigetsudō school. The aoi, often called a hollyhock or wild ginger, is actually a short-stemmed flowering grass traditionally associated with the Aoi Festival and Kamo Shrine in Kyoto. The triple aoi leaf in a circle was the crest of the Tokugawa clan, the lineage of the shogun. Rather than attributing any political significance here, the educated reader of Edo times would surely have made the connection to Lady Aoi of the early eleventh-century novel *Tale of Genji*. Edward Seidensticker in his translation of the classic cleverly rendered the chapter title with the nonce word “Heartvine,” evocatively alluding to the plant’s heart-shaped leaves. JTC



243

Shimizu Ryūkei (1659 – 1720)
One Hundred Townspeople

Dated 1717

Carved and painted wooden figures
53.2 x 48.8 x 4.8 (21 x 19¹/₄ x 1⁷/₈)
Private Collection, Kyoto

- Though born in Edo, Shimizu Ryūkei took Buddhist vows as a young man and worked in Kyoto as a Buddhist sculptor most of his life. After the death of his teacher, Priest Tankai (1629 – 1716), a noted Buddhist sculptor of the day, Ryūkei started carving wooden figurines of townspeople, drawing on his observation of actual street scenes.

Each miniature figure, none taller than six centimeters, is carved in the round from a single block of wood. Objects the figures carry and accessories such as weapons or umbrellas were carved separately. The figures were carefully painted to reproduce convincingly the effect of colorful garments. Many of the women’s faces were coated with white pigment (*gofun*, ground oyster shell); men’s faces were left the natural wood color. Hair and eyes were delicately brushed in with ink. Though

the carving is somewhat rough, the sculptor’s scrupulous attention to costume and hairstyles, poses, and bodily and facial expressions makes the sculpture an invaluable visual documentation of the social strata of the day. Ryūkei included a small scroll in his own hand relating the circumstances behind the production of these remarkable figures. He recounts: “First I created the scene of Old Doctor Genpaku inquiring about the health of a man with rheumatism. Next I tried to make another figure resemble a man tipsy after drinking sake from a gourd. Thereafter I carved one figure after another — one by one, ten by ten — until the count reached a hundred.” The wide range of figures includes young children on an outing, attendants to a daimyo, Buddhist and Shinto priests, participants in a street fight, peddlers, dancers, and entertainers of many types. JTC



244a
Go game set

Early nineteenth century
Lacquer on wood with makie
45.5 x 42.2 x 28.2 (18 x 16⁵/₈ x 11¹/₈)
Tokyo National Museum

244b
Shōgi game set

Early nineteenth century
Lacquer on wood with makie
37.3 x 34.3 x 23 (14³/₄ x 13¹/₂ x 9)
Tokyo National Museum

244c
Sugoroku game set

Early nineteenth century
Lacquer on wood with makie
29.1 x 40.3 x 22.7 (11¹/₂ x 15⁷/₈ x 9)
Tokyo National Museum

• Together, go, shōgi, and sugoroku are called the “three board games” in recognition of their popularity through early modern times. Mastery of board games was considered one of the Four Accomplishments of a Chinese gentleman, and scenes of people testing their skills at go were frequently depicted in Chinese-style paintings created by the Kano school. Go is also the game of choice for the men passing time in a pleasure boat in Moronobu’s *Scenes of Daily Life in Edo* (cat. 240). As the culture of the bordello evolved, the speedier and less mind-straining games of shōgi and sugoroku became increasingly popular. Scenes of courtesans and their clients playing sugoroku appear frequently in genre paintings of the Edo period, for example in the

Hikone Screen (cat. 233). In Chōshun’s masterwork of a courtesan enjoying incense, the sugoroku board is provocatively used as a bench, but its very presence suggests that she has tested her skills with a male client (cat. 245).

Go (also known as igo; Chinese: *weiqi*) is an ancient game of Chinese or Indian origin that remains popular even today in Japan. The game is played by two people. The black side starts with 181 stones, the white side with 180; the total of 361 matches the number of intersections on the board. The opponents attempt to surround and capture each other’s territory. As in chess, the basic moves are extremely simple but allow for complicated anticipatory strategies, which have made the game popular with the court, priestly, and samurai intelligentsia through the ages. Officials of the Tokugawa shogunate considered the game so important that the government subsidized four go training academies, and annual go championships were held in Edo Castle with the shogun in audience.

Shōgi, often likened to chess, traces its origins to India, which is also the source of the western version of chess. Shōgi is played on a board with nine by nine squares. Each side has twenty pentagonal pieces inscribed with a name — for instance, *ōshō* (king), *kinshō* (gold general), or *ginshō* (silver general). The object of the game is to checkmate the opponent’s king; failing complete victory, the player who captures the most enemy pieces wins. As testimony to the prestige accorded board games, in 1607 the Tokugawa shogunate began to award an annual stipend to a commissioner of shōgi and go, and the nation’s best shōgi masters competed for the post in annual tournaments sponsored by the shogun.

Sugoroku, or “double sixes,” is a close equivalent of backgammon or the Indian game of pachisi. The type of sugoroku shown here is played by two or more people using dice and counters. Players advance their pieces (fifteen each) across the board, according to the roll of the dice, until someone manages to get all of her or his pieces into the opponent’s territory. Another popular type of sugoroku during the Edo period was played on a woodblock printed sheet showing stations of the Tōkaidō highway.

These three sets of game boards and pieces were part of the bridal trousseau belonging to the daughter of a daimyo of the Wakayama fief, Kii province, who in 1816 married a son of the eleventh Tokugawa shogun, Ienari (1773 – 1841). The crest with three aoi leaves in a roundel was the exclusive preserve of the Tokugawa family. During the Edo period, when the Tokugawa shogun ruled the land, a marriage between a daimyo’s daughter and a shogun’s son was fraught with political significance and was often viewed as a means to cement political alliances. It was therefore imperative for the daimyo bride to bring furnishings that adequately bespoke the prestige of the provincial chieftain. JTC



244a



244b



244c

245

Miyagawa Chōshun (1682 – c. 1752)
Courtesan Enjoying Incense

c. 1720s

Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk

87.1 x 36.6 (34 1/4 x 14 1/2)

Tokyo National Museum

• A high-ranking courtesan swathed in flowery robes enjoys the fragrance of incense wafting upward through her robes from a small censer placed at her feet, and perhaps from another hidden in her collar. The wisp of aromatic smoke rising from her collar is subtly suggested by a slender funnel of light color against the background. The courtesan's long, luxuriant hair remains uncoiffed, suggesting that she has just returned from the bath. The light brown obi is loosely knotted in front, the usual practice for courtesans. She is seated on a board used for sugoroku (a backgammon-like game), an allusion to earlier paintings in the tradition such as the *Hikone Screen* (cat. 233). The folding screen in the background, rendered in a vaguely Kano academic flower-and-bird style, shows a spring scene of a pair of sparrows cavorting, one perched on a branch of red plum blossom. The image of the plum blossoms, noted for their sweet fragrance, serves as a visual complement to the wafted incense. JTC





246

Incense game set

Eighteenth or early nineteenth century
Lacquer on wood with gold and silver
hiramakie; fittings of iron and silver
15.5 x 23.6 x 17 (6¹/₈ x 9¹/₄ x 6³/₄)
Tokyo National Museum

- The Edo period saw the flourishing of the incense ceremony (*kōdō*), a highly refined pursuit in which participants test their skill at identifying fragrances emitted by burning scented wood or other aromatic substances. Incense connoisseurship had been the province of the court, priestly, and samurai aristocracy through the medieval period, when it became increasingly ritualized in a fashion

comparable to the development of the tea ceremony. By the Edo period, however, the incense ceremony acquired a large following among wealthy merchants and artisans as well. The presence of an incense set in the painting of a courtesan by Miyagawa Chōshun (cat. 245) is a reminder that the use of incense, both in competitions and in solitary appreciation, reached a peak during the Genroku cultural Renaissance of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

The incense set here was designed for a competition in which participants tried to identify the fragrances of four different types of incense. Three varieties would be burned in advance to allow participants to memorize each scent. Then the three types, plus an unknown “guest” variety, would be burned in random order, and participants would attempt to distinguish the subtle variations in aroma.

The large lacquer box, decorated with a motif of scattered fans on black lacquer ground, was designed to hold all the necessary accoutrements of the incense competition. At the right rear are the paper packets that held the incense. The shallow box in the front right holds the implements for preparing and burning the incense. The cylindrical containers in the center include a tiered container for incense, a container with a hole in the top for participants to place markers identifying the variety, and two different types of vessels for sniffing incense. The tray to the left rear held the little squares of metal known as leaves of silver (*ginyō*), which supported the incense when placed in the censer. The board in the left foreground was used for keeping score. JTC

247
Suzuki Harunobu (c. 1724 – 1770)
Daikokuten as a Woman

1765
Color woodblock print
24.8 x 19.1 (9³/₄ x 7¹/₂)
Tokyo National Museum

Illustrated page 388

• Daikokuten, one of the seven gods of good fortune, is usually shown as a portly old merchant man in Chinese costume and cap. In this “transpositional” or mitate image, the male deity is represented by a svelte young woman. She is gently poised on a bale of rice while holding the sacred mallet, one of Daikokuten’s attributes, said to confer good luck and riches. Both the mallet and rice bale are decorated with a magic jewel motif, representing the vital forces of yin and yang, the complementary male and female principles. Daikokuten’s sack is full of precious objects, which he bestows freely on children.

The print has passed through the hands of two distinguished collectors. The red rectangular seal in the left corner indicates it was once owned by the noted painter Kawanabe Kyōsai (1831 – 1889), an avid collector of Edo art, who was renowned for his dexterity in a wide array of painting styles. The small oblong seal beneath Kyōsai’s is one used by Henri Vever, a French jeweler who was one of the great western collectors of ukiyoe early in this century. In the 1920s Vever sold a number of prints from the early stages of his collecting to Matsukata Kōjirō, who subsequently donated most of them to the Tokyo National Museum. JTC

248
Suzuki Harunobu (c. 1724 – 1770)
Ebisu as a Young Man

1765
Color woodblock print
26 x 19.8 (10¹/₄ x 7³/₄)
Tokyo National Museum
Important Art Object

Illustrated page 388

• Ebisu, a god of good fortune, who is usually depicted as a corpulent old fisherman, is shown here in a mitate version as a wakashu (an elegant young man) in effeminate garb. He has the identifying attributes of the god of wealth: the fishing pole and a wheeled wooden toy in the shape of a sea bream, a fish whose Japanese name has propitious connotations for the New Year because it sounds like *medetai*, or “auspicious.” The wakashu’s robes are decorated with toy ship motifs, a reminder of the treasure ship that served as a vessel for the seven gods of good fortune.

This work was designed as a calendar print, with the numbers of the long months hidden in the design of the fish. The earliest calendars were printed sheets showing long and short months (*daishō no surimono*) — the only information they provided was which months had twenty-nine days and which had thirty, a disposition that varied from year to year. Such calendar prints were privately commissioned and distributed among friends who shared literary or artistic interests. Many designs that began as calendar prints were reissued in commercial editions, as was the case with the series including the preceding print (cat. 247). JTC

249
Suzuki Harunobu (c. 1724 – 1770)
Pilgrimage on a Rainy Night

Late 1760s
Color woodblock print
27.6 x 20.5 (10⁷/₈ x 8¹/₈)
Tokyo National Museum
Important Art Object

• A young woman balances a wind-blown lantern in her tiny hand; its candle appears to be unlit, but by convention the lantern suggests a nocturnal setting. As rains and winds buffet her fragile body and tear at her umbrella, she betrays not an hint of discomfiture in her midnight pilgrimage. The solid, bright red posts of the shrine entrance suggest her destination. Though we have no specific clues, from our knowledge of the customs referred to in other Harunobu prints with shrine settings, we may deduce that the young woman is on her way to pray for the success of a new relationship or to place a hex on a rival lover. Harunobu’s genius was in the creation of such emotionally suggestive settings in which to place his vision of eternally youthful beauty. JTC





250
Suzuki Harunobu (c. 1724–1770)
Whispering

c. 1766–1768
Color woodblock print
28.4 x 21.2 (11¹/₈ x 8³/₈)
Tokyo National Museum

251
Suzuki Harunobu (c. 1724–1770)
Lovers on a Veranda

c. 1766–1768
Color woodblock print
27.5 x 20.2 (10⁷/₈ x 8)
Tokyo National Museum

• In these two images Harunobu effectively uses the veranda setting to represent an intermediate space between an interior, intimate, and private sphere of human activity and an exterior, exposed, natural place.

In the first example (cat. 250) a young woman whispers a secret into her girlfriend's ear. The latter conceals her tittering (or astonished) expression with the raised collar of her inner robe. Completely swathed in loose-fitting garments, the two figures merge into a delightful medley of soft forms and curved lines. The flowery motif of the rose-colored robes of one woman seems to grow right out of the garden soil, bestowing an organic unity on the



composition. In Harunobu's hallmark style the youthful figures are situated in a highly structured architectural matrix of intersecting diagonals, here accented by the reed screens and latticed windows. In the room to the rear a smoking set and clock indicate the cross purposes of pursuing leisure and keeping appointments.

In the second image (cat. 251) a maid spies on a woman and a young man through a crack in the sliding doors. Playing on the theme of voyeurism, the artist allows the viewer into a small, intensely private moment we are not supposed to see but cannot resist. JTC



252
Suzuki Harunobu (c. 1724–1770)
Shimizu, from Seven Komachi,
Up-to-Date Style

c. 1767
Color woodblock print
Approx. 31 x 14 (12 1/4 x 5 1/2)
Tokyo National Museum

- A courtesan, on the right, and her teenage apprentice pause for a moment to look back at the cherry blossoms. The courtesan's outer robe, with the sash tied in front in the manner of her profession, is decorated with a scene of a plank bridge amid a marsh of iris blooms. The scene evokes the classical literary associations of the eight-fold bridge chapter from the tenth-century classic *Tales of Ise* (see also cat. 163).

The print series draws inspiration from another classical source, the seven legendary accounts of Ono no Komachi (active c. 850), the court lady and poet of the early Heian period. During medieval times a cycle of seven *nō* plays based on the legend of the famous poet presented Komachi as a poet of enticing beauty but melancholy mood and amorous dispassion. The story alluded to in this print is that of Shimizu (or Kiyomizu) Komachi, which recounts the poet's visit to Kiyomizudera, a temple in Kyoto, and her chance encounter with her fellow poet Prelate Henjō.

The inscribed verse appears to be a burlesque of a poem thought to be included in the now-lost medieval *nō* play *Shimizu Komachi*. The common version, alluding to the waterfall used for ritual ablutions at the temple, has the poet reflecting on growing old: "How is it that/my body has aged/all to no avail,/while the view of the waterfall/remains forever unchanged?"

The artist has playfully altered a few words to change the poem's meaning to "How is it that my sash has been loosened, all to no avail..." The implication is that the courtesan's elaborate obi has loosened its knots for many a client, but all to no avail. JTC



253
Katsukawa Shunchō (d. 1821?)
Two Young Men by the Riverside

c. 1780s
Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk
99.6 x 45.7 (39 1/4 x 18)
Itabashi Art Museum, Tokyo

- A male youth dressed in fine long-sleeved robes, with a long sword tucked into his sash, approaches a slighter, older acquaintance enjoying a smoke by the water's edge. By their hairstyle, dress, and general deportment, both can be identified as *wakashu*, elegant young men who made their living as kabuki actors or as amorous companions to older male patrons.

The man squatting by the water's edge holds a long-stemmed pipe in his right hand while he raises a spread fan above his head in what appears to be a gesture of greeting. Behind the seated man is a rather posh lacquer smoking kit. The youth who approaches him has gentle, effeminate features. The sword, which he would never use, is an affectation. As if in some tacit code of rendezvous etiquette, his fan remains closed in response to the other man's open-fan gesture.

The entire scene of young men alone is effused with subtle and not so subtle homoerotic suggestions. The irises in the foreground are playful reminders of the age of male innocence: they are associated with the Boy's Day festival, which is celebrated in the fifth day of the fifth month of the lunar calendar, or the early summer season — the setting here. Willow trees also can be linked to male sexuality, the long spiky leaves being symbols of the male component of the "willow and flower" world of the pleasure quarters.

Although he was a pupil of Katsukawa Shunshō (1726–1792), Shunchō created few actor prints and instead produced pictures of courtesans in the idiom of the all-influential Torii Kiyonaga (1752–1815). His prints survive in great numbers, but paintings securely ascribed to his hand such as this are extremely rare. JTC



254
Kitagawa Utamaro (c. 1754–1806)
Woman in Summer Attire
c. 1795
Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk
101.5 x 31.9 (40 x 12 1/2)
Tōyama Memorial Museum, Saitama

- Although best known to posterity and in his own day as a print designer, Utamaro was a skilled painter as well. About twenty or so paintings confidently ascribed to the artist's hand survive. In this painting on silk a young woman peers intently into a small hand mirror as she repairs her makeup. We have happened upon the subject in a private mode as she is caught up with her own reflection.

The black ground of her robes is accented with white tic-tac-toe and more complex crisscross patterns. Against the conservative patterning of the robes, a deep green obi sash decorated with trailing clematis motifs makes a strong impression. Still, the overall effect is understated, reflecting the fashion trends among geisha of the artist's day. Looking closely, however, we can make out a little exposed section of her robes' bright red underlining — a hint of latent eroticism.

In the foreground, resting on the tatami mat, is a round fan decorated with a design of purple morning glory blossoms, atop which is placed a small rectangular insect cage. These objects function as a still life within a portrait to indicate the season: both the fan and cricket cage are connected with summer. The flowers, literally "morning face," connote early morning freshness, but also the idea of a young woman whose face is beautiful even without makeup. The sound of crickets connotes the leisurely pace of summer. JTC

255
Kitagawa Utamaro (c. 1754–1806)
The Fancy-Free Type, from
Ten Types of Female Physiognomy

c. 1792–1793
Color woodblock with mica
37.8 x 24.3 (14 7/8 x 9 1/2)
Tokyo National Museum
Important Cultural Property

Illustrated page 390

- This refreshing design captures a young woman just after finishing her bath, still wringing a hand towel. Her light cotton robe, decorated with roundels of phoenixes, is wrapped casually over her shoulder, revealing the outline of her breast. She has tied her still-wet hair in a casual manner with an unbalanced array of combs and hairpins. The overall color scheme of light hues against a bright white mica background conveys a sensation of glowing beauty.

The print belongs to a series titled Ten Types of Female Physiognomy, though only five designs were produced. A subsequent series, Ten Categories of Female Physiognomy, took up the same theme but did not give specific titles to the personality types. This woman is described as the "fancy-free" type, to borrow Timothy Clark's clever translation, which captures the various connotations of the term in the Edo context of "fickle," even "promiscuous," but also a bit "showy."

Kitagawa Utamaro, with the support of his publisher Tsutaya Jūzaburō (1750–1797), was recognized as the premier portrayer of feminine beauty following the retirement of Torii Kiyonaga. Like nearly every print artist of the time, Utamaro came under the sway of Kiyonaga's tall svelte beauties with gentle, refined features, but he soon surpassed his predecessor in his beauty prints. At the peak of his career, in the 1790s, Utamaro concerned himself almost exclusively with depictions of beautiful women, especially highly stylized portraits of courtesans and geisha of the Yoshiwara licensed quarters. JTC



256

256
Kitagawa Utamaro (c. 1754 – 1806)
The Mosquito Net

c. 1797
Color woodblock print
Approx. 37.5 x 25 (14³/₄ x 9⁷/₈)
Tokyo National Museum
Important Art Object

- A courtesan gazes through a mosquito net at her young male companion, who holds a pipe. Utamaro took great delight in experimenting with the visual effects of viewing figures through the veil of semitransparent mosquito nets, paper or bamboo screens, and gauze fabrics. The idea of a slightly restricted view intensifies the suggestion of voyeurism and erotic subtlety. This image closely recalls the artist's series *Model Young Women Woven in Mist*, published a few years earlier by Tsutaya Jūzaburō, where women are depicted half-length, one inside and one outside semi-transparent material of various types. The phrase "woven in mist," while recalling that polychrome prints are also known as "brocade prints" (*nishikie*), suggests that the images of women seen through translucent screens are partly obscured as though wrapped in spring mists. Pursuing the theme here, the artist shows the courtesan in three-quarter length but now with a male admirer.

The print belongs to a small group of three-quarter-length portraits produced about 1797 and published by Moriya Jihei. Each of the prints experiments with clever optical or lighting effects created by viewing figures through translucent materials, in a mirrored reflection, or illuminated by a lantern on a rainy night. JTC

257
Kitagawa Utamaro (c. 1754 – 1806)
Two Women Preparing Sashimi

c. 1798 – 1799
Color woodblock print with mica
38.1 x 25.4 (15 x 10)
Los Angeles County Museum of Art,
Gift of the Frederick Weisman
Company

- Two women are busy preparing sashimi for a banquet. The younger woman, whose smaller size and brighter clothes are the sole indication of her relative youth, grates a large radish. Printed mica makes the raw fish sparkle, indicating its freshness. This print belongs to a group of designs showing scenes of domestic life published by Ōmiya Gonkurō around the turn of the eighteenth century, most of which show a scene of a mother with a baby or child. As with the following print (cat. 258), this image should not be viewed as a completely innocent expression of harmonious home life. The exposed breast teases the male voyeur of this domestic scene, and the thick, long daikon radish, commonly used in Japanese cooking, has erotic connotations. JTC



257



258

258

Kitagawa Utamaro (c. 1754 – 1806)
Yamauba and Kintarō

c. 1804 – 1805

Color woodblock print

38.3 x 25.5 (15¹/₈ x 10)

Tokyo National Museum

Important Art Object

• Many of Utamaro's images treat the subject of mother-child relationships. His depictions range from the most tender and innocent to playful and rambunctious. The artist created some fifty designs of Yamauba, a mountain woman, and Kintarō, her son, who grew up to be one of Japan's legendary heroes, renowned for his feats of great strength and derring-do. In his late nineteenth-century biography of Utamaro the French writer Edmond de Goncourt went so far as to elevate images of Yamauba's maternal devotion to the spiritual plane of the Virgin Mary. Yet many of the prints take on a distinctly erotic tone. Other prints in the series play on Kintaro's Oedipus complex — they kiss not tenderly but passionately.

Knowing of the other prints precludes the possibility of an innocent reading of this one. Here Kintarō is depicted typically with a round face of ruddy complexion crowned by a thatch of thick hair surrounding a small circle of his shaven pate. He sips milk from a shallow bowl as he glances lovingly up at his mother while pushing a leg into her breast. In a related image the artist shows a nearly identical scene of Kintarō suckling his mother's breast; here the child sucks up the milk as though it were from a breast.

As in other prints in this series, Yamauba has a very long face with almond-shaped eyes; her long scraggly hair cascades down her shoulders. Her eyebrows are bushy, and her teeth are blackened. The innumerable loose strands of hair on both Yamauba and Kintarō provided the block carver with daunting technical challenges: only infinite patience and a sure hand could get each strand just right. JTC

259

Tōshūsai Sharaku (active 1794 – 1795)
The Actor Segawa Tomisaburō II as Yadorigi, Wife of Ōgishi Kurando

1794

Color woodblock print with mica

37.5 x 25 (14³/₄ x 9⁷/₈)

Tokyo National Museum

Important Cultural Property

• Following on the success of Kitagawa Utamaro in capturing various aspects of the female persona in bust portraits, Tōshūsai Sharaku burst on the Edo art scene in the spring of 1794 with his series of distinctive bust portraits of actors. A prolific artist, Sharaku created some 145 print designs; most are of kabuki actors, but some depict sumo scenes, and a smattering of images show historical personages. He then abruptly disappeared soon after the New Year's kabuki performances of 1795. Before making his appearance as a print designer, he seems to have worked as a nō performer under the sponsorship of a daimyo family from the province of Awa (on the far side of Edo Bay).

All of the examples reproduced here are from Sharaku's earliest work, inspired by plays performed in the fifth month of 1794. Nearly every print from his first two or three months is outstanding both in technical finesse and artistic expression. Examples from the end of his output give the impression of an artist suffering from overwork, though there are some strong compositions from late 1794.

Sharaku created a sensation by his naturalistic suggestion or slight exaggeration of an actor's actual features, especially in the shape of the nose, jaw, and jowls. Since not all actors were handsome, some unflattering portraits with the strong flavor of caricature resulted. This print shows the male kabuki actor Segawa Tomisaburō II as Yadorigi, the wife of townsman Ōgishi Kurando. The kabuki play from which it derives, *A Flowery Soga-Style Vendetta Tale of the Bunroku Period* (*Hana ayame Bunroku Soga*), is a pastiche of the

classic vendetta plays on the theme of the Soga brothers and forty-seven masterless samurai (*rōnin*). The (once purple) kerchief over the actor's forehead is a remnant fashion harking back to the seventeenth century, when young men playing female roles, or *onnagata*, wore kerchiefs to cover their shaven forelocks. The carefully coiffed hairstyle with its array of wooden hairpins and barrette accurately reflects the elaborate wigs the *onnagata* wore on stage. The sharply articulated nose, the squarish outline of the jowls, and the jutting jaw reflect the actor's actual appearance and run counter to a long tradition of depicting female impersonators as beautiful women with graceful features. Rather than the usually passive gaze of paintings of women, here the renowned recalcitrant personality of the actor is evoked by the tiny but highly pronounced eyes and arched eyebrows that connote an inner hardness. The tightly closed lips add a suggestion of superciliousness. JTC



260

Tōshūsai Sharaku (active 1794–1795)
The Actors Sanokawa Ichimatsu III as
the Prostitute Onayo of Gion and
Ichikawa Tomiemon as Kanisaka Tōma

1794

Color woodblock print with mica

37.8 x 24.5 (14⁷/₈ x 9⁵/₈)

Tokyo National Museum

Important Cultural Property

• Sharaku also created a handful of double bust portraits, all of which are ranked among his most powerful prints, though their extreme scarcity suggests that they were not originally issued in editions as large as the single bust portraits. This image depicts the onnagata Sanokawa Ichimatsu III in the role of the courtesan Onayo of Gion alongside Ichikawa Tomiemon as Kanisaka Tōma. Both are roles from the same vendetta play mentioned in the previous entry. The kerchief on Ichimatsu indicates he is playing a female role; the pale blue area on Tomiemon's head represents the stubble of a man's shaven pate. The robes with the actors' identifying crests overlap in a delightful medley of pattern and outline. Ichimatsu grasps the hilt of a sword, an allusion to the revenge plot at the heart of the play.

Double bust portraits offer an excellent way to understand how Sharaku creates a remarkable sense of individuality with the utmost economy of means, and how he turns caricature into high art. The artist makes much of the intriguing visual contrast between the elongated, eagle-nosed face of Ichimatsu and the pudgy-cheeked face of Tomiemon. The latter's eyes are accented with a touch of red makeup. The glances of the actors cross, suggesting that they are preoccupied with different worries. JTC



260



261
Tōshūsai Sharaku (active 1794 – 1795)
The Actor Ichikawa Ebizō as Takemura
Sadanoshin

1794
Color woodblock print
37.8 x 24.5 (14⁷/₈ x 9⁵/₈)
Tokyo National Museum
Important Cultural Property

• Ichikawa Ebizō, better known as Danjūrō V, one of the most famous actors of his day, was renowned for his “rough stuff” (*aragoto*) roles. Though the actor’s distinctive facial features would have been instantly recognized by any theatergoer of the day, his identity is further confirmed by the triple “rice-measuring” box crest on his bright orange-red robes. The role is from a performance with an unwieldy title, typical of kabuki plays, that may be loosely rendered as *The Colorful Reins of a Beloved Wife: Yoshitsune of the Thousand Cherry Trees* (*Koinyōbō somewake tazuna: Yoshitsune senbon zakura*). The play was staged at the Kwarazaki Theater in the fifth month of 1794.

The artist has captured the intense glare of the actor by setting the eye-balls slightly off center to mimic the effect of actors in a climactic scene (*mie*). The actor’s eyebrows are arched in excited emotion, and with brilliant economy of brushstrokes, the actor’s features are suggested through a series of broadly curving lines. Attention is drawn to the exaggerated hook nose and high cheekbones. As simple as the portrait seems, the artist has given the initiated viewer everything needed to identify the famous actor immediately. JTC

262
Tōshūsai Sharaku (active 1794 – 1795)
The Actors Nakajima Wadaemon
as Bōdara Chōzaemon and Nakamura
Konozō as Gon of the Kanagawaya

1794
Color woodblock print
37.8 x 25.1 (14⁷/₈ x 9⁷/₈)
Tokyo National Museum
Important Cultural Property

Illustrated page 44

• Another rare double bust portrait, this image provides an interesting study in contrasting personality types. The scowling character on the right, played by Wadaemon, known derisively as “Dried Codfish,” is shown dressing down the homeless boatman played by Konozō.

Western cataloguers early in the century mistakenly took the overly ample fleshy features of Konozō for those of a sumo wrestler, a subject Sharaku dabbled in during his short tenure as an ukiyoe artist. Scrutiny of the actors’ crests of the robes here and consultation of contemporary kabuki programs, however, allowed the next generation of scholars to confirm the names of the actors and roles.

The play from which the scene derives is another pastiche of vendetta plots, *A Medley of Tales of Vengeance* (*Katakiuchi noriai-banashi*), which was staged at the Kiri Theater, also in the fifth month of 1794. Sharaku thus was producing prints for three different theaters simultaneously — testimony not only to the popularity of his designs but to the power of his publisher, Tsutaya Jūzaburō. JTC



263



264

263
Tōshūsai Sharaku (active 1794 – 1795)
*The Actor Ōtani Oniji III as the
Servant Edohei*

1794
Color woodblock print
36.8 x 23.6 (14 1/2 x 9 1/4)
Tokyo National Museum
Important Cultural Property

• Based on another scene from *The Colorful Reins of a Beloved Wife* (see cat. 261), this print captures both the actor's distinctive features and the essential character of a samurai's manservant (*yakko*) who is called upon to carry out dastardly deeds. The eyes, enclosed in rectangular outlines of red, and the furled eyebrows convey utterly evil intent. The grimace, anchored on each end with accents of dark ink, shows this man will brook no compromise. Captured at a climactic moment, the actor thrusts his hands out in intense anger as if to strangle someone. JTC

264
Tōshūsai Sharaku (active 1794 – 1795)
*The Actor Nakayama Tomisaburō
as the Courtesan Miyagino*

1794
Color woodblock print
36.8 x 23.6 (14 1/2 x 9 1/4)
Tokyo National Museum
Important Cultural Property

• The onnagata Nakayama Tomisaburō, posing here as the courtesan Miyagino, conveys a gentler disposition than Segawa Tomisaburō II in cat. 259, though the features are similar. It seems as though this character could bring herself to smile. Tomisaburō played this role in *A Medley of Tales of Vengeance* (see cat. 262) at the Kiri Theater in 1794. JTC

265
Katsukawa Shunshō (1726 – 1792)
*The Sumo Wrestlers Onogawa
and Tanikaze*

1783
Color woodblock print
Approx. 37.5 x 51 (14 3/4 x 20 1/8)
Tokyo National Museum

• A match between these two great wrestlers in the second month of 1782 reignited interest in sumo among Edoites. Tanikaze Kajinosuke, the reigning champion with a streak of sixty-three victories over four years, was pushed out of the ring by the younger Onogawa Kisaburō. This earthshaking match attracted many new fans to the sport. Print sellers, always with a finger on the pulse of public taste, saw the coming sumo boom and started commissioning their best designers of actor prints, especially of the Katsukawa atelier, to try their hand at sumo prints.

For the print designer the subject of wrestlers posed many of the same challenges faced earlier in creating a new type of actor prints, particularly how to balance realism and stylization of a celebrity's well-known features. It should come as no surprise that artists of the Katsukawa lineage, masters of the actor print, would be the pioneers in the sumo print genre.

In this extra large format print, Shunshō offers a “blow-up” view of Onogawa, on the right, and Tanikaze finishing up the preliminary rites before a match. The referee, Kimura Shōnosuke, dons full formal wear with sword at hip and ceremonial fan in hand, contributing to the ritual aura of the event. During the opening rites, influenced by Shinto purification rituals, wrestlers throw salt and water on themselves. They slap their thighs with portentous solemnity as they rock back and forth, lifting one leg and then the other in carefully orchestrated syncopation, to find the perfect mental and physical equilibrium. The psychological warfare has begun even before the referee drops the fan to open the match.

Apparently Tanikaze was Shunshō's favorite wrestler, and it does seem as though Tanikaze is portrayed here in a more favorable light. Onogawa is shown squatting, with his rump nearly hitting the ground while he loosens up his arms and legs. Tanikaze, in a more dignified portrayal, towers above in an aggressive stance. In any case, because this print is one of the few from the 1780s depicting the two sumo heroes together, it was among the most sought-after sumo prints and went through three separate editions. JTC

266
Katsukawa Shunshō (1726 – 1792)
*The Sumo Wrestlers Kajigahama and
Sekinoto*

1784
Color woodblock print
Approx. 37.5 x 51 (14 3/4 x 20 1/8)
Tokyo National Museum

• In contrast to Shunshō's early experiments in the sumo print genre, here he captures the wrestlers locked in strong-armed combat as Kajigahama Rikiemon, on the right, grapples with Sekinoto Hachirōji while the referee Kimura Shōnosuke presides.

Sumo prints posed unique challenges to the print designer. For instance, in pictures of matches, the artist had to connote persuasively the intense dynamism of two wrestlers in the ring, while at the same time allowing the faces of both wrestlers to be seen. The best prints manage to capture both wrestlers in a good light. Here the artist is still grappling with effective poses. JTC





267
 Katsukawa Shunkō (1743 – 1812)
*The Sumo Wrestlers Kashiwado,
 Edogasaki, and Tanikaze*

1787
 Color woodblock print
 Approx. 38 x 26 (15 x 10 1/4)
 Tokyo National Museum

- When Katsukawa Shunshō stopped producing sumo prints in the late 1780s, his pupil Katsukawa Shunkō emerged as the leading designer in the field. Shunkō continued to create portraits of wrestlers in formal poses and scenes of matches in the style of his teacher. One of his own innovations, however, was the depiction of sumo wrestlers in street clothes. Here the massive Tanikaze towers over his companions Kashiwado, on the right, and Edogasaki, in the center. Edogasaki holds a fan with the portrait of Danjūrō V, one of the most popular actors of the day, in full makeup (see cat. 261). JTC





268

Katsukawa Shun'ei (1762 – 1819)
*The Sumo Wrestlers Kajihama and
 Jinmaku*

c. 1790

Color woodblock print

Approx. 38 x 26 (15 x 10 1/4)

Tokyo National Museum

- Shunkō assumed Shunshō's responsibilities for the management of the Katsukawa atelier (then gave up print design altogether when his right arm became paralyzed), and Shun'ei became the most sought-after designer of sumo prints from about 1790 through the early years of the nineteenth century. This young pupil of Shunshō's arrived on the scene just as sumo was undergoing another resurgence in popularity, this time fueled by excitement over the simultaneous promotion of Tanikaze and Onogawa to the supreme sumo rank of *yokozuna* (see also cat. 265).

Full-figure double portraits as seen here follow a basic model perfected a few years earlier by Shunshō. The wrestlers' bodies are rendered nearly identically; only the faces differ. Standing shoulder to shoulder, the wrestlers wear the ankle-length ceremonial aprons (*keshōmawashi*) that were donned for the grand entry ceremony at the beginning of a sumo tournament. Presented by wealthy patrons, the aprons were often fashioned from fine silk brocade and decorated with bold patterns, such as the waves or flower motifs seen here. The aprons also usually bore the name of the wrestler in large Chinese characters. Here the wrestlers are identified as Kajihama, on the right, and Jinmaku. JTC



269
Katsukawa Shun'ei (1762 – 1819)
The Sumo Wrestlers Arauma and Kōgamine

c. 1800
Color woodblock print
Approx. 38 x 26 (15 x 10 1/4)
Tokyo National Museum

• This image is a hybrid of the formal double portrait and the depiction of wrestlers in everyday clothes that Shunkō introduced (cat. 267). It appears that the match is over for the day. Both wrestlers have just returned from the bath, their robes loosely draped over their corpulent bodies. Kōgamine, in a green checkered robe, holds a pipe in one hand while he dangles a tobacco pouch and pipe case in the other. Arauma's brightly colored ceremonial apron with a wave design can be seen beneath his light cotton robe with torn banana leaf motifs. JTC

270
Katsukawa Shun'ei (1762 – 1819)
The Sumo Wrestlers Ōtsuna and Araiwa at a Bordello

1803
Color woodblock print
Approx. 38 x 26 (15 x 10 1/4)
Tokyo National Museum

• This print represents sumo wrestlers in everyday poses. Here the young wrestler Araiwa, in the rope motif robes on the right, boogies with the older Ōtsuna. This print belongs to a delightful set of images of sumo wrestlers frolicking in the Yoshiwara pleasure quarter, created by Shun'ei about 1803. The absence of a censor's seal and the use of a mica background suggest that such images were private commissions. In the same year Utamaro and Shun'ei collaborated on a set of prints on a similar theme of wrestlers enjoying bordello parlor games, with Utamaro adding depictions of Yoshiwara courtesans. JTC

271
Keisai Eisen (1790 – 1848)
Courtesan

c. 1820s
Color woodblock print
Approx. 75 x 25 (29 1/2 x 9 7/8)
Private Collection, New York

Illustrated page 392

• A high-ranking courtesan (oiran) completely fills this vertical diptych of woodblock prints, designed to resemble the hanging-scroll format commonly used for Japanese paintings. The courtesan's outer robe has a bold design of a dragon over swirling waves against a black background. Underneath, her robes have an elegant flower motif and a red lining. Her deep green obi is decorated with auspicious bat and smaller butterfly motifs. A panoply of tortoiseshell hairpins and combs nearly overpowers her elaborate coiffure. Her face, with a long straight nose and eyes that glare unforgivingly, reflects the "hard edged" beauty preferred by ukiyoe artists and their customers beginning in the 1820s.

This image takes on a particular significance for its inspiration of Vincent van Gogh's *Courtesan*, an oil painting of 1887. This print was reproduced, in reverse, on the cover of a special edition of the magazine *Paris illustré*, entitled "Le Japon," issued in May 1886. Van Gogh made a tracing and grid sketch of the magazine cover that he transferred in enlarged form to canvas.

Keisai Eisen, a man of many talents, was not only a prolific painter and designer of ukiyoe prints but also an author of plays, popular novels, and historical essays. For a short while Eisen even managed his own bordello in the Nezu district of Edo, until it burned down. He is best remembered, however, for his woodcut images of courtesans, often portrayed as we see here with a certain hauteur. JTC



272

Juban kabuki costume with hina dolls
and shell-matching game containers

Nineteenth century

Appliqués and silk and metallic
thread embroidery on silk satin

44.8 x 62.6 (17 ⁵/₈ x 24 ⁵/₈)

Tokyo National Museum

- Hina dolls and the shell-matching game described in the following entries (cats. 273, 274) were the inspiration for the decorative motifs on this kabuki costume. This garment, called a juban, belonged to Bandō Mitsue and is thought to have been worn in *A Maiden at Dōjō Temple* (*Musume Dōjōji*), a play that involved a succession of instantaneous costume changes. The juban was worn under another robe in kabuki dance performances and would have only been seen after the outer robe was removed (see cat. 230). The hina dolls and shell-matching game containers appliquéd and embroidered on the costume are not associated with the kabuki play but are well-established auspicious designs. In the Heian period dolls in the form of flat paper figures of young men and women were used in purification rites. Individuals would transfer all impurities from themselves to the paper talisman by breathing on it and rubbing it over their body. The doll would then be tossed into a fire or flowing stream, cleansing the person or their family from all impurities. The shell-matching game, also originating in the Heian period, required finding corresponding pairs based on the scenes painted on the interiors of the shells. Recognizing the symbolism of a well-matched couple, samurai and wealthy townspeople of the Edo period often included shell-matching game sets as part of a wedding trousseau. The hexagonal boxes on this garment are decorated with cranes, symbols of longevity, and detailed with braided silk cords and tassels. SST



273

Shell-matching game

Eighteenth or early nineteenth century

Shells with color and gold pigment;
lacquer on wood with makie

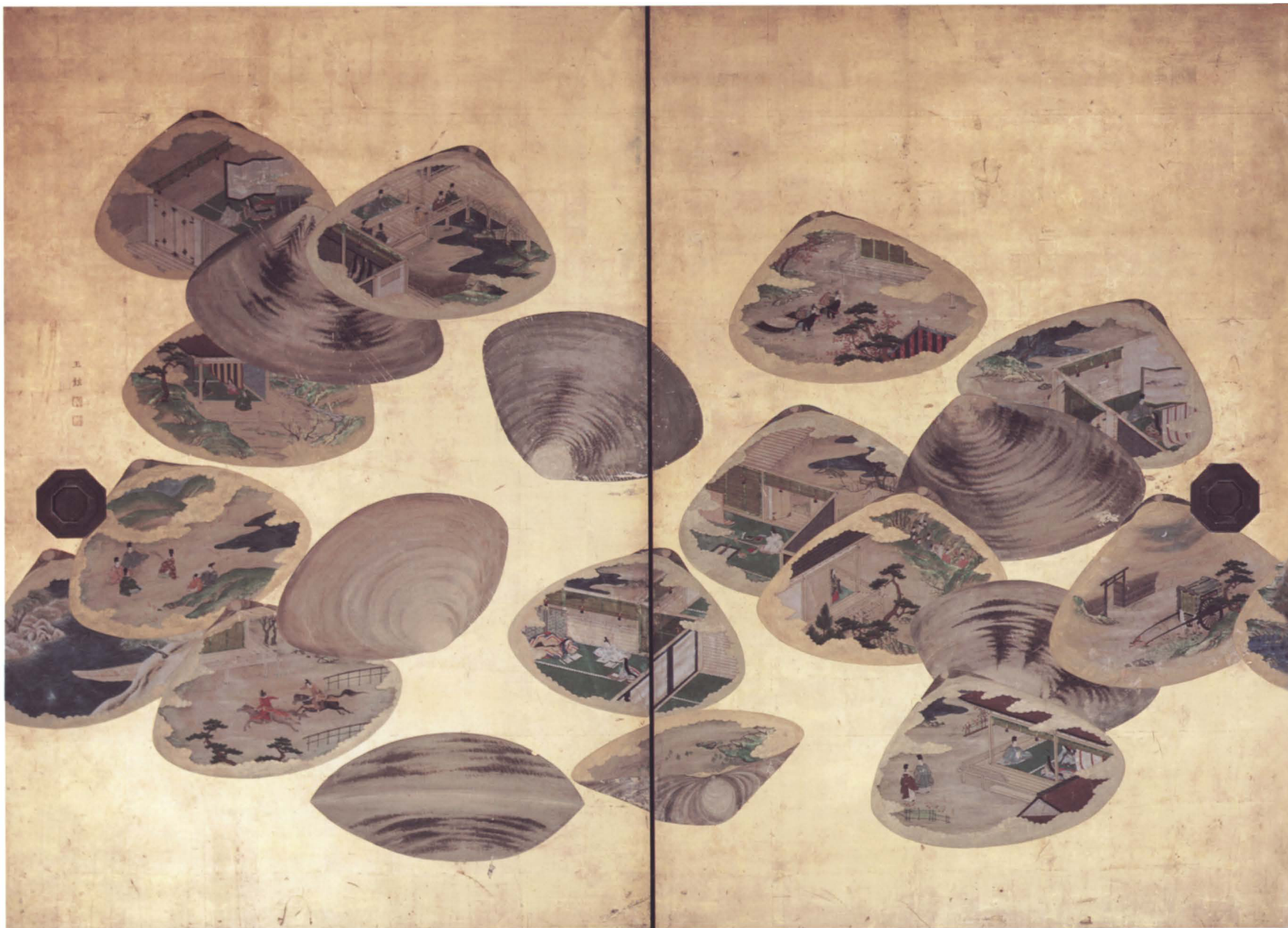
43.5 x 53 (17 ¹/₈ x 20 ⁷/₈)

Sendai City Museum, Miyagi

- Shell matching (*kai awase*) was a popular parlor amusement of the Edo period, although it originated in chambers of aristocratic ladies of the Heian period. Each half of a shell was decorated with an identical miniature painting based on a scene derived from Japanese classical literature. The *Tale of Genji* and other romances were the most common sources of imagery. Some shells simply had decorative flower-and-bird motifs; other shells were inscribed with famous poems.

A complete set comprised 360 shells. The game is basically a test of memory: one set of shell halves is placed face down on the floor, and as shells from the second set are removed face up from the container, competitors take turns inverting shells to see if images match.

Since each side of the bivalve shells will match properly with only its original mate, the game came to be associated with marital fidelity. Appropriately, during Edo times a shell-matching game was often included in the suite of lacquer furniture that was part of the bridal trousseau of a daimyo lady. The black lacquer container here, in the standard octagonal shape, is decorated with the auspicious motifs of plum, bamboo, and pine. JTC



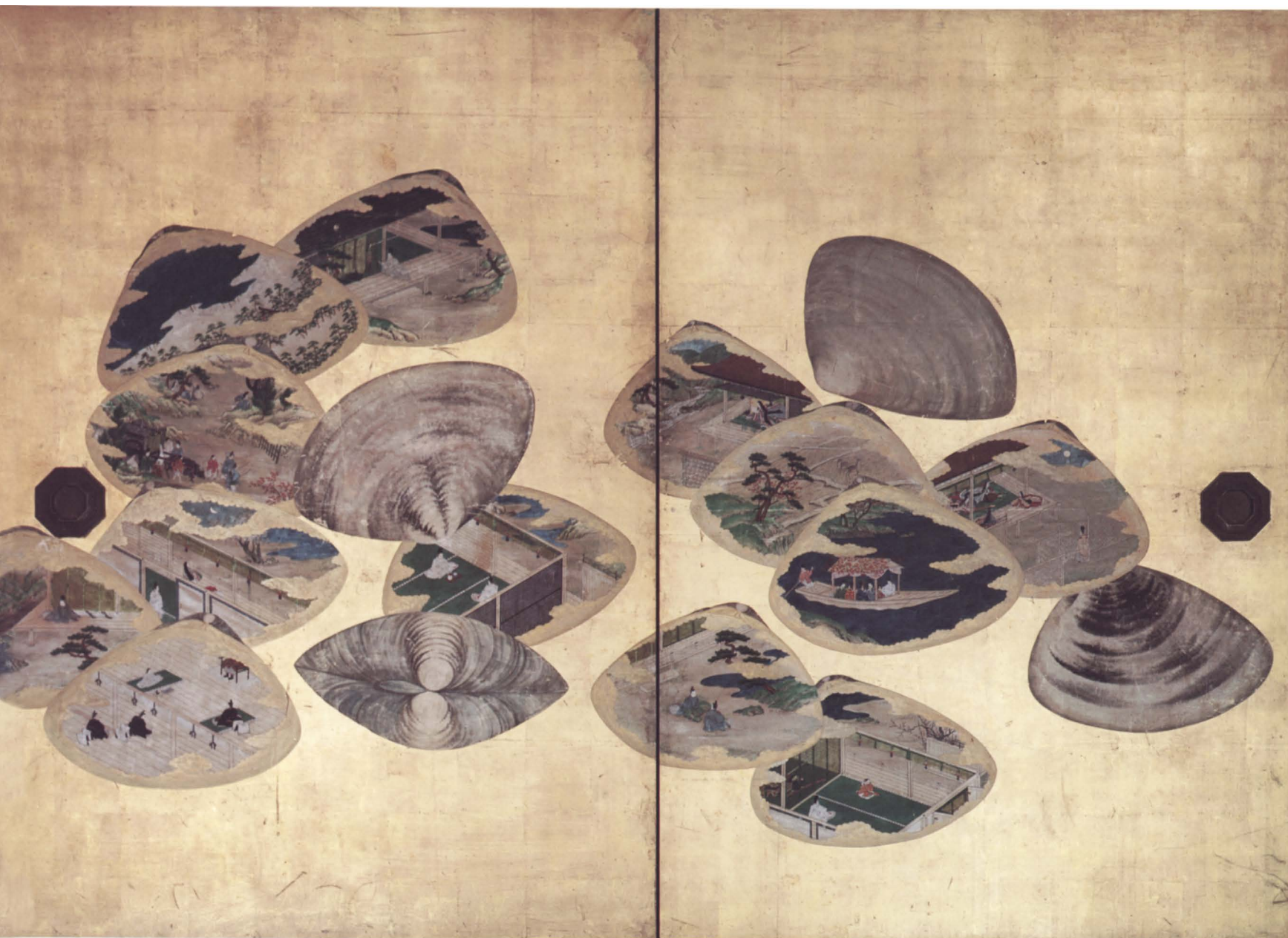
274
Shimokōbe Gyokugen
(active early nineteenth century)
Genji Shell Game Screen

Early nineteenth century
Four sliding-screen panels; ink,
color, and gold on paper
Each 165 x 114 (65 x 44⁷/₈)
Private Collection, Kyoto

• The popular shell-matching game became the theme for paintings on sliding screens showing oversize shells randomly arranged against a lush gold background. The insides of the shells are painted in bright colors in the Yamatoe style of painting that was traditionally associated with the court, but which enjoyed a revival during the nineteenth century through the patronage of wealthy merchant and samurai officials. This screen painting

cleverly plays on the viewer's expectations by boldly exaggerating the miniaturist form of shell painting.

The scenes derive from the *Tale of Genji*, a novel in fifty-four chapters that relates the life and loves of "Shining Prince" Genji. The second screen from the right, for example, includes images based on traditional iconography related to the Barrier



Gate chapter and the pine-dotted Sumiyoshi Shrine precincts, the setting of another chapter of the novel. The pictorialization of the *Tale of Genji* was a well-established practice: the painting and figural style of these screens are archaic, but the overall design concept is innovative for the period.

The signature and seals identify the artist as Shimokōbe Gyokugen, who was active in Kyoto during the early part of the nineteenth century. JTC



275
Ozawa Kagaku
(active c. 1830 – 1850)
Costume Dances

Dated 1839
Handscroll; ink and color on paper
31.6 x 503.5 (12½ x 198¼)
Osaka City Museum

• As the scroll unfurls, we relive the excitement of wild costume dances, captured in all their colorful splendor and frenetic energy. The dances occurred in Kyoto during several weeks in late spring 1839. The scroll opens with the title brushed in archaic-style calligraphy; the four boldly inscribed Chinese characters may be deciphered as “dancing incognito” (*fuchi butō*). The artist Kagaku has created a remarkable uninterrupted dance scene stretching some five meters in length. Dancers

cavort in fantastic costumes, among them a man with a beard and a tall bald cap posing as the god of good fortune Jurōjin, a long-nosed goblin with flowery wings, a frog, an octopus, a turtle, fish, bugs, birds, and butterflies. In a subsequent section of the scroll dancers dressed as bales of rice sheaves bounce wildly about, accompanied by the god of thunder, in a demonic red mask and with a circle



of drums tied to his torso; Blue Fudō Myōō, a Buddhist guardian deity (Sanskrit: Achala Vidyaraja), is adorned with a fiery halo. Further along we find Jō and Uba — the aged married couple from the auspicious nō play *Takasago* — frolicking with brooms in hand. A retinue of nearly naked men, heads wrapped in yellow kerchiefs, are linked together by the loose ends of their loincloths. Townspeople in everyday clothes are also caught up in the spirit of the masquerade dance.

According to the colophon, inscribed by an early owner of the scroll a year or so after it was painted, the dance at the time was referred to as a butterfly (*chō-chō*) dance because of the showy costumes people wore. It was also sometimes referred to as a *choi-choi* dance, since people often broke into singing popular folk songs that included rhythmic refrains such as “*choi-choi*.” The artist signed and dated the scroll at the beginning of the fourth month of 1839, which the records reveal is just about the time

the dance craze started to wane. About that time the artist created a six-panel screen on the same theme. Early in his career Ozawa Kagaku had studied under Ganku (cats. 205, 206), and he later worked in the Shijō style under the tutelage of Yokoyama Kazan (cat. 135). His experience as an illustrator of medical texts is reflected here in his convincing representation of human anatomy in varied poses. JTC

276

Utagawa Kuniyoshi (1797 – 1861)
*The Warrior Miyamoto Musashi Subduing
 a Whale*

c. 1847 – 1850

Triptych of color woodblock prints

36.8 x 73.7 (14 1/2 x 29)

Private Collection, New York

• By stretching the image of an enormous whale across three woodblock prints, Utagawa Kuniyoshi suggests the bulking scale and volume of the sea beast. Dwarfed by the whale and oceanic background, the famous swordsman Miyamoto Musashi (1584 – 1645) subdues his prey against all odds. The broad expanse of the white and spotted-black body of the whale stands out against the dynamic spectrum of blues used to suggest the roiling waves. The application of red for the artist's gourd-shaped signature cartouches, Musashi's sword sheaf and collar, and the (already bleeding) mouth of the whale contributes to the coloristic drama. Intriguingly, the eye of the whale conveys an aspect of calmness in the middle of the samurai's furious attack.

Kuniyoshi has exploited the triptych format to the fullest, turning it into a wide screen. Ukiyoe print triptychs are usually designed so that each sheet is a self-contained image. Here the right print, showing only a whale's tail, could not very well stand alone.

The precise source of the story is unclear, but the text in the cartouche in the sky area of the left print tells us that Miyamoto Musashi at one time, "in the seas near Hizen province [near Nagasaki] speared a large bowhead (*semi*) whale."

Musashi, a master swordsman, martial arts expert, and author of the samurai guidebook *Book of Five Rings*, was also a talented ink painter in a Zen-inspired style (see cats. 84, 85). During the Edo period legends of Musashi's superhuman exploits were widely circulated by itinerant storytellers and appeared in popular literature of the day. JTC





277
Utagawa Kuniyoshi (1797 – 1861)
He Looks Fierce, but He’s Really a Nice Person, from an untitled series of composite portraits

c. 1847 – 1848
Color woodblock print
Approx. 38 x 26 (15 x 10¹/₄)
Private Collection, Hyōgo

• Kuniyoshi’s playful composite portraits are known as assembled pictures (*yose-e*) or jigsaw pictures (*hame-e*). This example is typical: a cluster of small, mostly naked human bodies in various contortions have been shaped into the strange face of a person. The nose and brows are formed by the naked man in a crouched position. The hair is made of the body of a black man holding a thick club of some sort. Eyebrows are indicated by a pair of men’s black loincloths, whiskers by the wispy locks of a bald man’s head. The upper and lower lips are indicated by red cloth.

In the title the artist states, “He looks fierce, but he’s really a nice person,” and adds the moralizing statement, “Many people have come together to make a truly fine person, but in the end, it’s true for everyone, without receiving something from others, one cannot become a good person.”

The so-called three stripes in a circle crest on the cotton robe links this figure directly to depictions of the legendary twelfth-century warrior Asahina Saburō made by Kuniyoshi and other ukiyoe illustrators. This identification also explains the oxymoronic inscription on the print, for Asahina was indeed a warrior often depicted with fierce demeanor of a kabuki actor in battle makeup. But Asahina was a beloved hero, famous for defeating demons in an encounter with the king of hell. JTC

278
Utagawa Kuniyoshi (1797 – 1861)
A Person Who Looks Down on Others, from an untitled series of composite portraits

c. 1847 – 1848
Color woodblock print
Approx. 38 x 26 (15 x 10¹/₄)
Private Collection, Hyōgo

• This composite portrait shows a man with a prominent jutting jaw, coincidentally resembling America’s favorite lantern-jawed cartoon character, Popeye the Sailorman. As with the previous example, the man’s face is composed entirely of small human forms, except that here the eye is created by a black-lacquer rice bowl. Looking closely, we see that his whiskers are actually a dark blue tattoo on a naked man’s shoulder. The artist titled this print “A person who looks down on others.” Apparently to suggest that through working together, people can resolve their differences and become better individuals, he adds the moralizing equation: “Though everyone thinks and feels differently, if they try to work together in various ways, they can eventually create a new individual person.” JTC

279
Utagawa Kuniyoshi (1797 – 1861)
A Young Person Who Looks Old, from an untitled series of composite portraits

c. 1847 – 1848
Color woodblock print
Approx. 38 x 26 (15 x 10¹/₄)
Private Collection, Hyōgo

Illustrated page 395

• Here Kuniyoshi constructs an image of a women who superficially looks old and proper, slightly formal, demurely proffering a tea cup. But beneath the gentlest exterior, we discover the most unsettling realities. Visually disentangling her face we discover it is composed of figures of naked men and women in contorted poses. The hair is formed by women in black-striped robes. Eyes are indicated by hair patches of naked men, while her tongue appears to be a red-lacquer utensil of some sort with a three-comma pattern. Her hands are formed by a tangle of legs and the exposed posterior of what might be a couple copulating. Her understated light brown cotton robe with squarish white patterns is offset by a red lining, in typical fashion of the day.

The print is called “A young person who looks old” as if to make viewers reflect on the superficial nature of beautiful appearances. The artist himself takes on the voice of the female subject, adding, “I am truly grateful that various people have come together to construct my face; because of everyone I now have a wonderful face.” JTC





280
Katsushika Ōi
(active mid-nineteenth century)
Yoshiwara at Night
c. 1850s
Hanging scroll; ink and color on paper
26.3 x 39.8 (10³/₈ x 15³/₄)
The Ota Memorial Museum of Art,
Tokyo

- Many of the paintings by Katsushika Ōi, daughter of the famous ukiyoe artist Katsushika Hokusai, experiment with exaggerated shading and lighting effects — testimony to the fascination late-Edo artists had with western painting techniques.

This diminutive painting, smaller than an average-sized print, is rendered in deep shadows and captures the lugubrious realm of the Yoshiwara demi-monde. The wooden latticed windows, which allow passersby to view the courtesans whose services are for sale, suggest to the modern viewer the prisonlike reality of the bordellos. The shadows, no doubt intended as a technical tour de force, convey to the modern viewers the gloom of the situation of the bordellos at the end of the Edo period.

Inside, light filtered through a three-sided screen with translucent white paper illuminates the parlor area. The courtesans, faces powdered pure white, are bedecked in gorgeous costumes and elaborate hairdos festooned with hairpins and spangles. The artist,

though a woman, has followed in the footsteps of her father in portraying courtesans with inexpressive, perfectly stereotyped, masklike facades.

Outside, lanterns of various shapes glow brightly in the darkened street, illuminating a procession of courtesans, child attendants (*kamuro*), and idle spectators. The Chinese characters on three of the lanterns can be deciphered as *ō*, *i*, and *ei*, forming “Ōiei,” an alternative form of the artist’s name. The lantern attached to the building identifies this bordello as the Izumiya and includes the catchphrase greeting, “A thousand customers, ten thousand welcomes,” Edo’s version of “Come one, come all.” JTC

281

Katsushika Ōi

(active mid-nineteenth century)

Cherry Blossoms at Night

c. 1850s

Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk

88.7 x 34.5 (35 x 13 1/2)

Menard Art Museum, Aichi

• As in the previous work, Ōi experiments with the optical effects of light and shadow. Here a young woman brushes a verse on a long poem card in the flickering light of a stone lantern taller than herself. Behind her the cherry blossoms in full bloom glow brightly.

The figure style of this and the previous painting conforms to the very stiff, highly stylized manner Hokusai used from about 1810 to 1830, after which he abandoned paintings of female subjects altogether. Followers, including Ōi, continued to produce paintings of beautiful women in the master's distinctive style — often, as seen here, in an even more mannered way.

The night sky is shown glittering with stars, a rare occurrence in the history of Japanese painting and evidence of the increased interest in astronomical phenomena derived from western science and optics at the end of the Edo period. JTC



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