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*Inside front and back covers: Signatures and seals from Rocky Coast and Chinese Figures (no. 10) by Nagasawa Rosetsu*

Most Westerners familiar with fine Japanese screens may not realize that their original function was more utilitarian than decorative. Portable and hinged for folding, they could be arranged to define and break up the open interiors characteristic of Japanese architecture. Screens were used side by side, facing each other, or curved around a particular area. Occasionally, they were placed flat along the side of a room to create the effect of wall paintings. Another ingenious way of providing privacy or enclosing a room was the use of beautifully painted sliding doors.

An integral part of Japanese life since the ninth century, screens reached their height of sumptuousness during the Momoyama and early Edo periods. The Metropolitan Museum of Art is fortunate to have a particularly splendid pair from the Momoyama period, depicting the Battles of Hōgen and Heiji, considered outstanding for richness of narrative detail and fine execution. Such screens, with their bold designs and jewel-like colors painted on a gold background, have been among those most prized by Western collectors.

The Museum has been acquiring screens for more than fifty years. One of its early purchases, made in 1926, is also one of the most notable—Kōrin's *Rough*

*Waves*, which was so highly regarded in Japan that it was reproduced as early as 1815 in an anthology of Kōrin's best works compiled by his follower Sakai Hōitsu. A recent acquisition of which the Museum is justly proud is a group of screens from the collection of Harry G. C. Packard, a long-time resident of Japan. Two of this group, nos. 7 and 12, are here reproduced for the first time.

The twelve screens and sliding doors described in this publication by Julia Meech-Pekarik, Associate Curator, Department of Far Eastern Art, show the remarkable diversity of the Museum's collection. They range in date from the early sixteenth to the late nineteenth century, in style from the most conservative to the most idiosyncratic, and in media from ink monochrome to dazzling color on gold leaf. Some are only a few feet high, and others are pairs more than thirty feet in length. The Museum looks forward to displaying these and the rest of its fine collection of Japanese art in permanent galleries and is deeply grateful to the Government of Japan, whose generous assistance is a major contribution to this forthcoming installation.

Philippe de Montebello  
Director

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# Twelve Japanese Screens

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**T**he portable screen was introduced to Japan from China and Korea in the eighth century, a time of widespread and enthusiastic assimilation of continental culture. In China the screen served primarily as a ceremonial backdrop for an important person such as a head of state or master of the house; a single framed panel on bracket feet or a tripartite screen with smaller side wings projecting forward was placed directly behind the dais or throne at the center of a room. Made of silk that was pasted onto substantial wooden frames, Chinese screens, which also stood on unprotected garden terraces, were sturdy and rather heavy, hence their name "wind screen," or literally, "protection from the wind" (*byōbu* in Japanese).

The Japanese adopted single- as well as multiple-panel freestanding screens to partition the open spaces that characterize their architecture. (An even number of panels ensured better balance when the screen was standing slightly folded in accordion fashion.) The typical residential mansion of the classical Heian period (794–1184) was an aggregate of big drafty rooms connected by covered corridors. Surrounding these rooms were deep verandas and narrow outer porches opening onto gardens. Living quarters could be shut off from the porches by grilled rain shutters and wooden doors, or, during the day, by bamboo blinds. Interiors were sparsely furnished and had bare wooden floors with straw tatami mats used for individual seating.

There were few permanent walls. Thus, to provide a measure of privacy for the family, numerous servants, and an occasional concubine who shared a communal roof, inner spaces were compartmentalized not only by screens but by a unique Japanese invention, sliding doors. These lightweight room dividers moved along grooved tracks in the floor and lintel, and their dimensions were standardized (about six feet high and three to four and a half feet wide) according to the distance between the pillars as well as the height between the upper and

lower tracks. The panels pulled open easily with no more than a light touch of the finger and could be removed altogether. Among the "truly hateful" things catalogued by a sensitive court lady in the early eleventh century was a lover, visiting secretly, who was clumsy at opening her door: "If one's movements are rough, even a paper door will bend and resonate when opened; but, if one lifts the door a little while pushing it, there need be no such sound."<sup>1</sup>

A scene from a twelfth-century handscroll illustrating *The Tale of Genji*, a novel of court life written a century earlier, shows a variety of partitions in use (opposite). A bamboo blind is rolled up to permit a view deep into the interior of a room where Genji's son, Yugiri, bends his head to hear the deathbed confession of a friend reclining on an elevated curtained platform, a kind of bedchamber. In the upper-right corner are two sliding doors with a landscape painting framed with brocade borders. Just below are four panels of a hinged folding screen that is also decorated with a delicate landscape of low rolling hills suggesting the scenery around Kyoto, the capital. Like the houses themselves, such early paintings have long since succumbed to the ravages of fire, but we know from vernacular literature that poetic seasonal themes, monthly events, and famous scenic spots were popular subjects. Paintings were clearly integral to the environment of the aristocracy, and their quality was a favorite topic of conversation.

The folding screens of this period, like the doors, were painted on silk pasted on paper. A few inches shorter than modern examples, they averaged four or five feet in height (it was possible for two people to converse over the top). They could be used singly, as here, or in sets of up to ten or twelve at a time. Each panel was bordered with patterned silk brocade, and the individual panels were tied together with colored leather thongs or silk cords pulled through holes in the top and bottom edges of the frame.



*Handscroll painting of The Tale of Genji. Mid-12th century. Color on paper. Tokugawa Museum, Nagoya*





*Sliding doors in the abbot's quarters of Tenkyū-in,  
at Myōshin-ji, Kyoto. Color and gold on paper*





Within the bedchamber in the Genji scene, and shielding the ladies of the house, at the left, are opaque silk hangings suspended from movable six-foot black-lacquer frames. These are called *kichō*, translated as "curtains of state." Social convention prevented men and women from mingling freely, so that when people moved about in a Heian house there was much shifting of screens and curtains as various individuals were shut off from the rest. Noblewomen, in particular, were required to spend their endless leisure hours indoors, hidden not only by their fans, their cascading floor-length hair, and their voluminous twelve-layer robes, but by a succession of blinds, doors, curtains, and screens. Nothing was more embarrassing to a Heian lady than broad daylight.

The restraining power of these flimsy partitions could prove quite formidable. Often, years of devotion were necessary before a man would be invited on the other side of a lady's screen, and he might never see her face until he was actually in her bed. There are stories of men feverishly aroused by the mere sound of a woman's long skirts rustling behind her blinds, while others fall in love at the sight of a lady's multicolored sleeves protruding under her curtains. It is hardly surprising that eavesdroppers and peeping toms were endemic to this world of otherwise highly refined and cultivated nobility. In fact, as described by one Heian lady, spying on others seems to have been rather relentlessly pursued: "The screen behind which I had been peeping was...

pushed aside and I felt exactly like a demon who had been robbed of his straw coat. I had not seen nearly enough and, rather annoyed at the interruption, I moved to one of the pillars where I could go on watching the scene from between a bamboo blind and a curtain of state."<sup>2</sup>

Innovations in screen design occurred by the end of the fourteenth century. Paper replaced silk as the preferred painting surface, and the awkward leather and silk-cord links between panels gave way to unobtrusive and flexible paper hinges. As a result of this technical advance, the wide brocade borders framing each panel were eliminated, leaving the artist an unbroken expanse suitable for continuous large-scale compositions. Screens were now commonly composed in pairs, and following the Far Eastern custom of reading from right to left, the order of their panels is always determined from the right side. For example, spring in a landscape of the four seasons (no. 1) appears at the far right of the right-hand screen of a pair, and winter completes the sequence at the far left of the left-hand screen.

When a new style of residential architecture evolved in the fifteenth century to accommodate the needs of a complex, stratified warrior society, efforts were also made to unify the compositions on long series of painted doors. Audience halls where mighty warlords or abbots of great Zen monasteries received their visitors were enclosed by a single continuous subject—like a large handscroll—linking all four sides (opposite). Corners were often given arch-

itectonic emphasis with representations of rocks and boulders. These enormous paintings covered not only the sliding doors but also back walls articulated with ornamental shelving and wide alcoves displaying hanging scrolls and flowers. Paper-thin sheets of gold leaf, about four inches square, were applied to screen and door surfaces to brighten the crepuscular gloom of dimly lit interiors and to reflect the soft, pearly daylight penetrating the deep eaves of rooms opening onto gardens.

The flamboyant new military leaders of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries understood well both the aesthetic and the political value of art. The monumental paintings they commissioned for public display, with bright colors and ostentatious use of gold leaf, were intended to arouse a sense of awe in the beholder. Powerful old trees stretching their limbs self-confidently across four golden doors were obvious symbols of the owner's wealth and prestige (see no. 5). This was an age when the importance vested in such works of art led one conquering general to present a grandiose screen of Chinese lions as a peace offering to his vanquished rival.

Styles and choice of painting themes were closely tied to the special function or character of a room. In Heian times Chinese subjects such as polo players or portraits of famous poets like Po Chū-i were selected for use at court ceremonies, while native landscape scenery was reserved for the private chambers of the nobility. At a later date it







was the pompous and colorful bird and flower paintings or didactic scenes of Chinese sages that graced the public halls, while quiet ink landscapes and amusing genre subjects were enjoyed in the intimacy of the living quarters. Extolling the bourgeois culture of a parvenu merchant class in the late seventeenth century, the novelist Ihara Saikaku (1642–1693) described the concern of his hardworking and thrifty hero for the effect a painting might have on his daughter: “When the young girl grew into womanhood he had a marriage screen constructed for her, and (since he considered that one decorated with views of Kyoto would make her restless to visit the places she had not seen, and that illustrations of ‘The Tale of Genji’ or ‘The Tales of Ise’ might engender frivolous thoughts) he had the screen painted with busy scenes of the silver and copper mines at Tada.”<sup>3</sup>

In the mercantile society of Edo period Japan (1615–1867), one-upmanship and self-indulgent materialism were carried to new heights. There is the story of an eccentric collector named Hikobei who owned two-hundred pairs of screens. When his rich neighbor asked to borrow five gold screens to supplement the twenty golden pairs he intended to set out for a special guest, Hikobei demurred, claiming to have no more than one small example in gold. The incredulous neighbor pressed his demand, only to find that although Hikobei did indeed own one-hundred pairs covered with gold leaf, there was only one three-foot-high six-panel screen made of *solid* gold.

The materials and construction of screens and sliding doors are basically the same even today: over a latticework frame of cryptomeria wood the moulder applies seven separate layers, each consisting of many small overlapping sheets of paper made from the bark of the paper mulberry. On alternate layers the sheets are pasted down only around their edges, rather than across their entire faces, leaving air pockets that increase the strength and durability of

the screen. The outermost layer serves as the painting surface. Especially sumptuous screens (no. 7) and doors between rooms (no. 5) are painted on both sides, but most backs are decorated with a simple allover printed pattern (opposite) that provides protection when the screen is folded for storage. Doors are exposed to the hazards of man and the elements for longer periods of time, and few have survived unscathed. Water damage, for example, has discolored the lower-left corner of the far left panel of the magnificent Old Plum in the Museum’s collection (no. 5). Since sliding doors cannot stand alone apart from their architectural setting, dealers have often joined dismantled door panels to make free-standing screens (nos. 3, 4). Extra-wide panels and oval paper patches replacing inset metal door pulls that have been removed are usually a clue to the origin of this kind of screen.

A screen painter may make as many as three full-size preparatory sketches, particularly if he is creating a complicated design such as The Battles of Hōgen and Heiji (no. 2). In the third and final sketch, which he will transfer to the screen by tracing, he draws the entire scene down to the smallest details. An artist who wishes to wield his brush swiftly with broad, sweeping strokes (see no. 10) must prop his screen upright against the wall, but most painters sit on a long narrow board suspended a few inches above the painting, which lies flat on the floor.

Whether gifted amateurs (such as the thirteenth-century Lady Nijō, whose weekend host was so jealous of her talents that he threatened to hold her hostage), professionals in well-organized workshops (nos. 3, 5, 6), or independent sons of well-to-do merchants (nos. 8, 9) and of impoverished samurai (no. 10), the great artists of every generation have sought new and ever more daring solutions to the special challenge of designing for sets of sliding doors and multifaceted screens.





*Bridge from the right screen*

Muted tones of ink on plain paper and a serenely balanced composition contribute to a mood of calm and quiet contemplation in this pair of screens, which may have been created for a Zen temple. Their few signs of human activity are dwarfed by the majestic sweep of the landscape panorama.

A Japanese viewer, seated in front of the screens on his tatami-covered floor, would be drawn into the landscape at the far right corner as he crosses a fragile bridge together with the aged scholar and his boy attendant (detail at the left). From here, narrow footpaths climb to remote mountain hamlets or descend toward the marshy coast where fishing boats cluster at the end of the day (p. 10). Following these paths, the viewer could leave his own world behind to wander deeper and deeper into the mist-enshrouded hills and valleys of the painting.

The large body of water surrounded by gently rolling hills of pines recalls the scenery of Japan, especially the region of the Inland Sea; but, despite the artist's attention to specific detail, this is an imaginary world, rich with poetic overtones. Reflecting a traditional Japanese sensitivity to the cycles of nature, all four seasons are shown together. On the right screen (pp. 10-11), the rain-drenched hills of spring give way to waterfalls and verdant willows, symbols of the summer season. On the left (p. 13), sparser foliage and descending geese (third panel) signify fall, and snow-covered mountains stand out against a dark winter sky.

These screens were painted during the first decades of the sixteenth century, when the great Zen temples of medieval Japan were suffused with a deep appreciation of Chinese scholarship and aesthetics. Ink landscapes in the Chinese manner and with Chinese themes were enlarged for screens and to cover the surfaces of temple walls and sliding doors. In *Landscape of the Four Seasons*, an educated and perceptive viewer would have derived additional pleasure in discovering its subtle allusions to a popular Chinese literary motif, the eight

scenic views of the confluence of the Hsiao and the Hsiang, two rivers in southern China. The Eight Views include such poetic themes as a mountain village in a light mist, a sailboat returning from a faraway shore, sunset over a fishing village, the evening bell from a distant temple, wild geese alighting on sand flats, and snow falling at evening over the river, among others. Many of the views are scattered throughout this painting, but without special emphasis, as if to test the jaded connoisseur. In place of a temple compound, for example, there is only a temple gateway, partially hidden behind the shoulder of a mountain in the second panel of the left screen.

Although the signatures and seals of Sōami, who died in 1525, were probably added to these screens at a later date, the style of the pair is very close to that of a set of twenty sliding doors of the Eight Views and Four Seasons that Sōami painted about 1513 for the Daisen-in, a Zen temple in Kyoto. Born into a cultivated family of poets and painters whose curatorial advice was sought out by Japan's rulers, Sōami had access to the best collections of imported Chinese ink paintings, including misty views of the Hsiao and the Hsiang by the Zen painter Mu-ch'i.



*Waterfall from the right screen*



*From the ink paintings of China, Sōami learned how to use subtly graded washes to form gently rounded hills and soft concealing mists. Spring and summer scenery are combined in a continuous panorama on this right-hand screen. Beginning at the lower right, footpaths lead toward villages hidden by heavy spring mists — only the roofs of a distant mountain hamlet are visible at the top of the first panel. Waterfalls and dense foliage are hallmarks of summer on the left three panels*

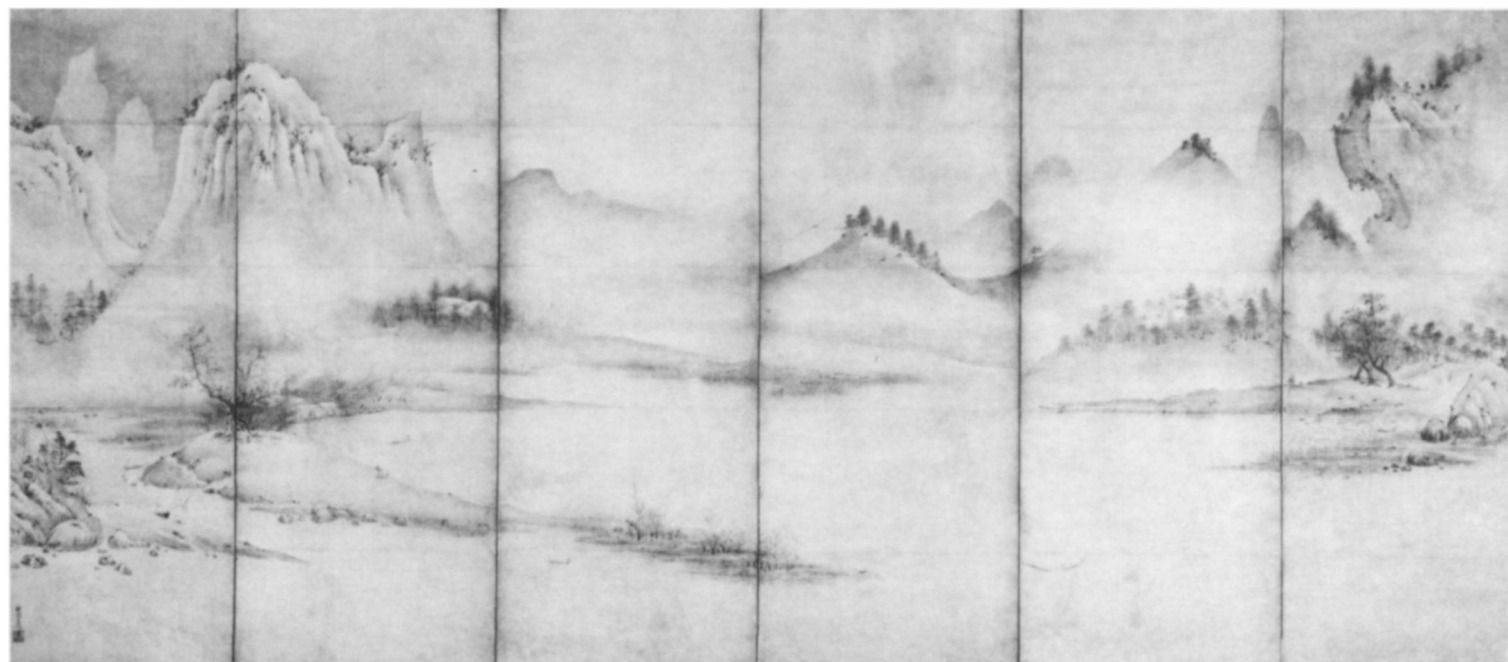
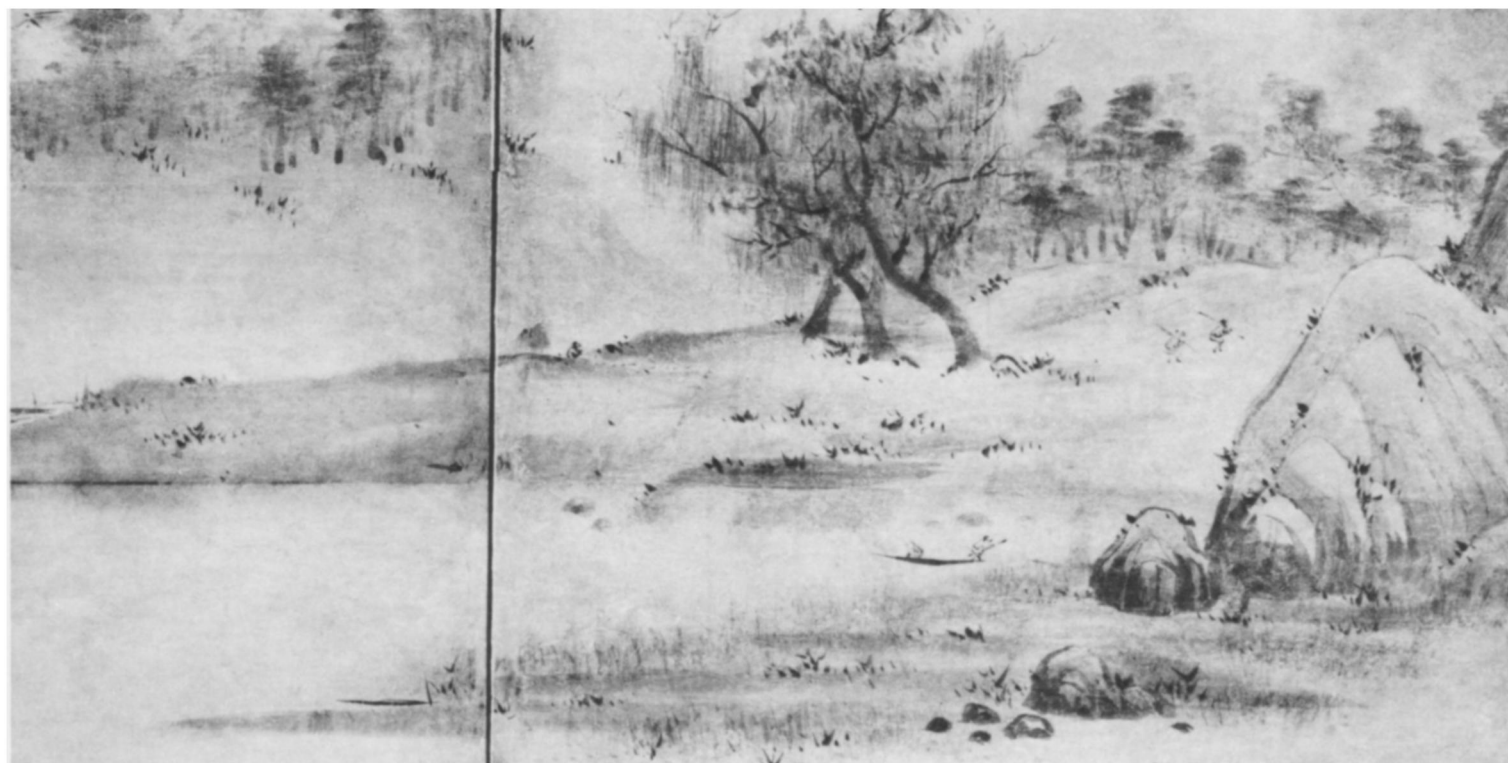






*The left-hand screen (opposite, below) shows fall, on the right, with fishermen mooring their boats and carrying home their rods and nets. Winter, on the left, is bleak and gloomy*









Soldier from the *Hōgen* screen

The most gruesome scenes of bloodshed and brutality, courage and cowardice are drawn in fascinating detail on this remarkable pair of sixfold screens. In both the viewer looks down from the west onto the eastern suburbs of Kyoto, the ancient capital of Japan. Each shows one of two fierce battles. The first was fought in 1156 (in the Hōgen era) and the second in 1160 (in the Heiji era). These rebellions were short—the Hōgen battle lasted no more than a day, the Heiji a few weeks—but they had far-reaching effects, as they mark the beginning of a long period of samurai rule.

The two screens document an increasing dependence of the court on the military strength of tough mercenary warrior clans. In the battle of Hōgen, Sutoku, a disaffected former emperor who has been forcibly retired, plots a revolt with Yorinaga, an ambitious but frustrated Fujiwara minister, and Tameyoshi, the Minamoto warrior chieftain. The reigning emperor, Go-Shirakawa, thwarts their plans by enlisting both Taira and Minamoto troops to execute a devastating night attack on Sutoku's Shirakawa Palace (at the center of the Hōgen screen, p. 17). In the Heiji rebellion jealous rivals of the now abdicated but still powerful Go-Shirakawa send Minamoto troops to abduct him and set fire to his Sanjō Palace (at the center of the third panel of the Heiji screen, p. 19). The Taira clan seizes this opportunity to improve their own standing in the capital by coming to the defense of Go-Shirakawa. They retaliate swiftly, and the climactic battle, in which the Minamoto are all but exterminated, takes place along the eastern bank of the Kamo River, near the Rokuhara mansion of the victorious Taira family (detail, p. 21).

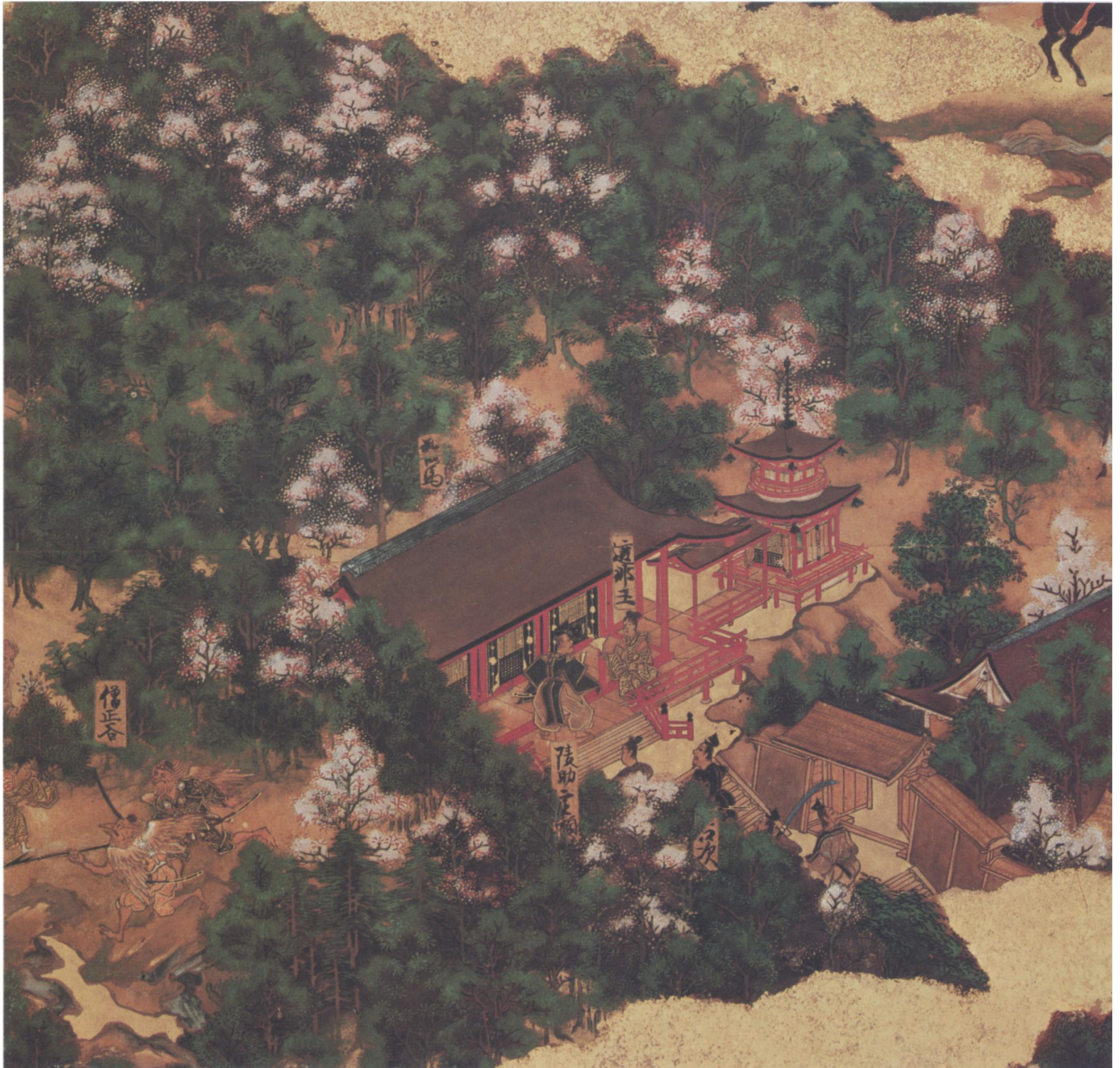
Japan's first historical novels, *The Tales of Hōgen* and *The Tales of Heiji*, were written within a century of these events to celebrate the stern warrior code of honor and bravery. Both novels were illustrated in contemporary handscrolls, which, three centuries later, served as models for the Metropolitan Museum's screens. To a late

sixteenth-century warlord, newly risen to power after decades of civil war, the stories must have been compelling and relevant.

The screens are attributed to an unknown artist of the Tosa school, skilled in the traditional style of action-packed narrative handscrolls. In fact, each tale is depicted here in about eighty continuous episodes. However, unlike a scroll, which unwinds a few feet at a time in chronological sequence, the screen format presents the entire story at once. As a result, scenes that occurred at the same place are visible side by side even if they are widely separated in time. Although major episodes are near the center and framed by hills encircling the city, and later events are generally relegated to the periphery and reduced in scale, tremendous concentration is required to follow the complex plot as it weaves back and forth across all six panels.

The artist ordered his composition by adopting some of the maplike conventions made popular in a then new type of folding screen illustrating famous places in and around the capital. The palaces and mansions of the major protagonists face one another in a gridwork pattern across diagonal axes established by the Kamo River and the Horikawa Canal. The topography of the city is quite accurate, with the Imperial Palace conspicuous in the lower-left foreground of each screen. Scalloped gold cloud bands eliminate unnecessary detail and subdivide the episodes into manageable units. To further aid the viewer, small labels identifying people and places were pasted onto the screens, either by the artist or at a later date.





The Kurama Temple from the Heiji screen



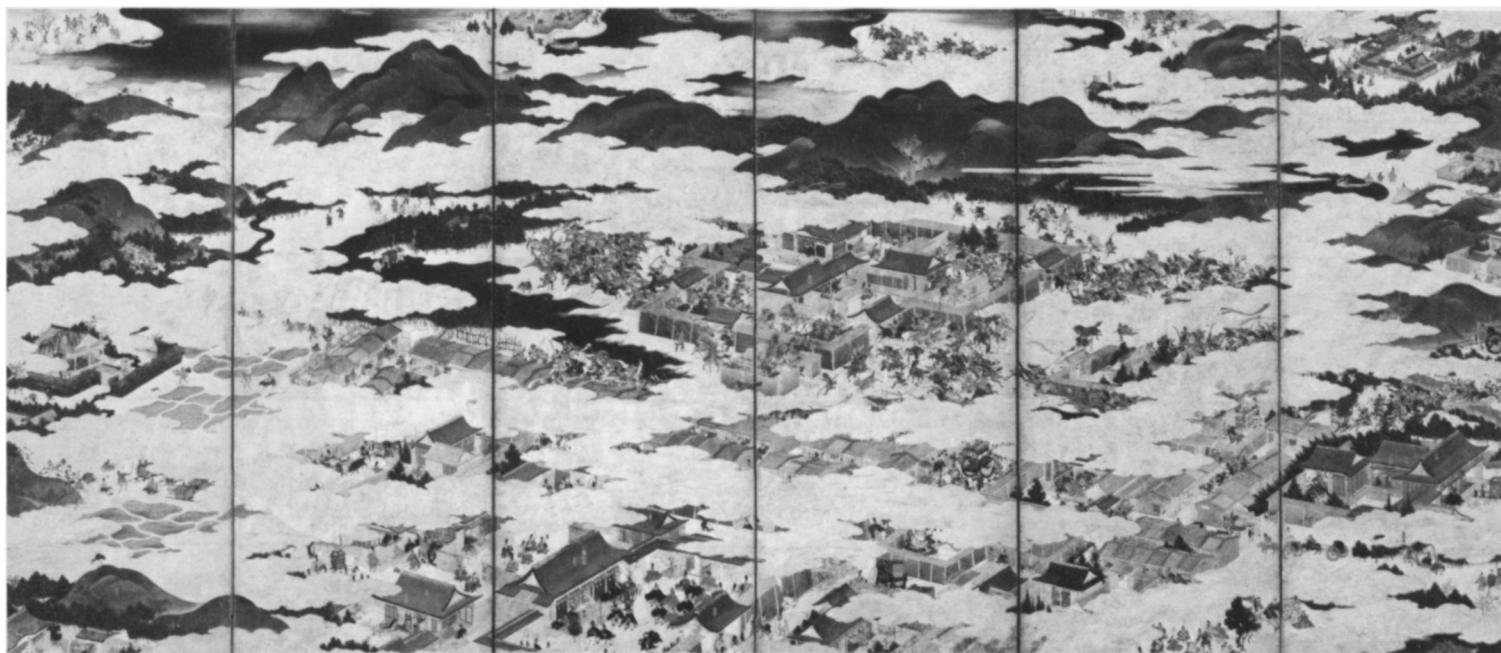
*Under heavy attack, courtiers flee on foot and by palanquin through the east gate of the Shirakawa Palace of the abdicated emperor Sutoku. Directly above the wall of the palace, Yorinaga, Sutoku's chief advisor and instigator of the Hōgen rebellion, is seen escaping on horseback, supported by a retainer riding behind him. Yorinaga is fatally wounded when a stray arrow pierces his neck.*

*In an earlier episode (lower right) a general wearing a crested helmet points the way toward the advancing enemy*



After the fall of the Shirakawa Palace, the mighty rebel warrior Tametomo, son of Tameyoshi, the defeated Minamoto chieftain, went into hiding. In the scene at the right he is discovered while enjoying a hot bath at the local bathhouse and taken prisoner.

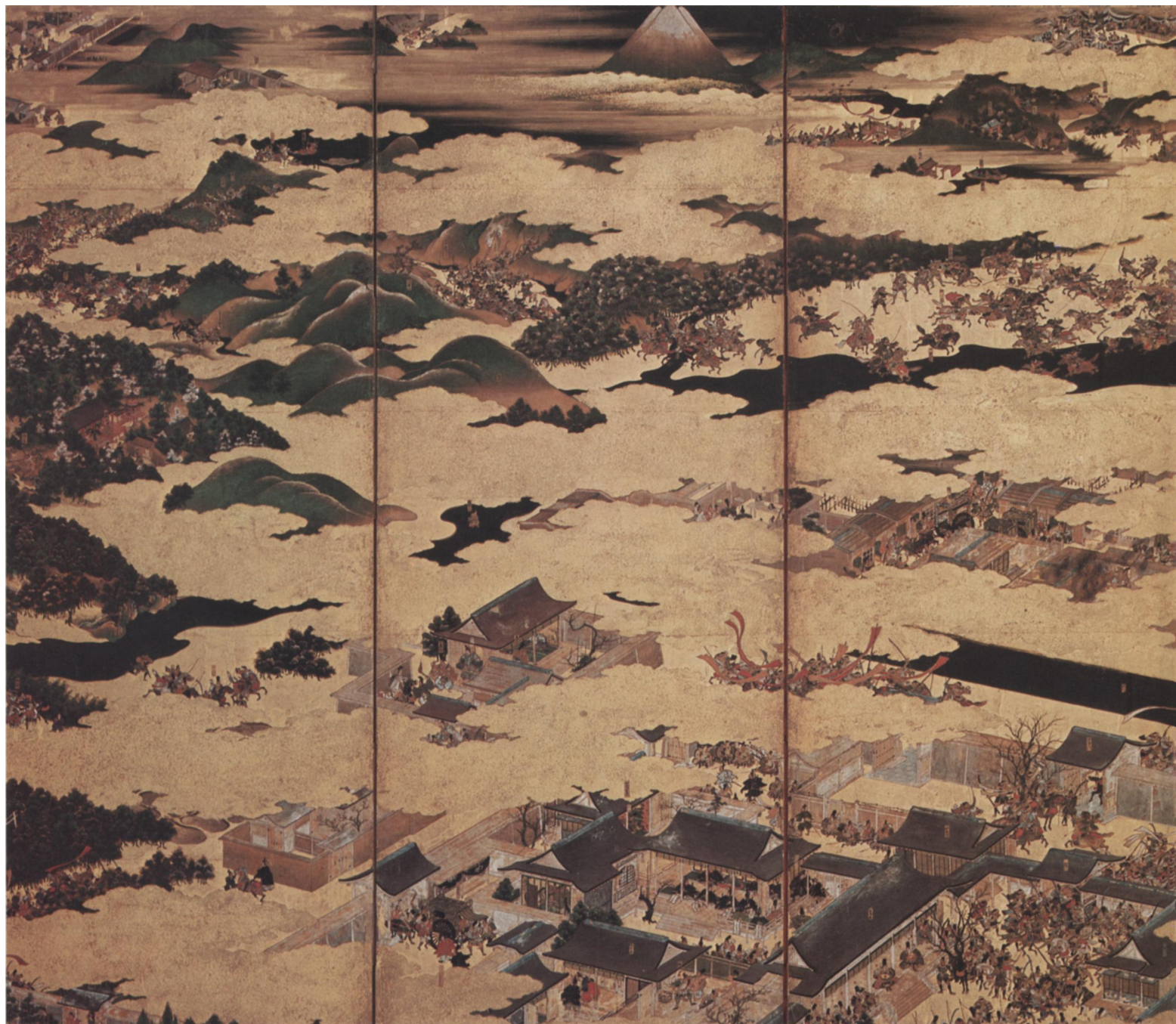
Exiled to the distant island of Oshima, he started to terrorize the natives and an army was sent against him. Here, at the left, Tametomo, seeing the imperial troops rowing toward the island, concedes defeat and cuts open his belly with a sword. Details from the top of the Hōgen screen (below)



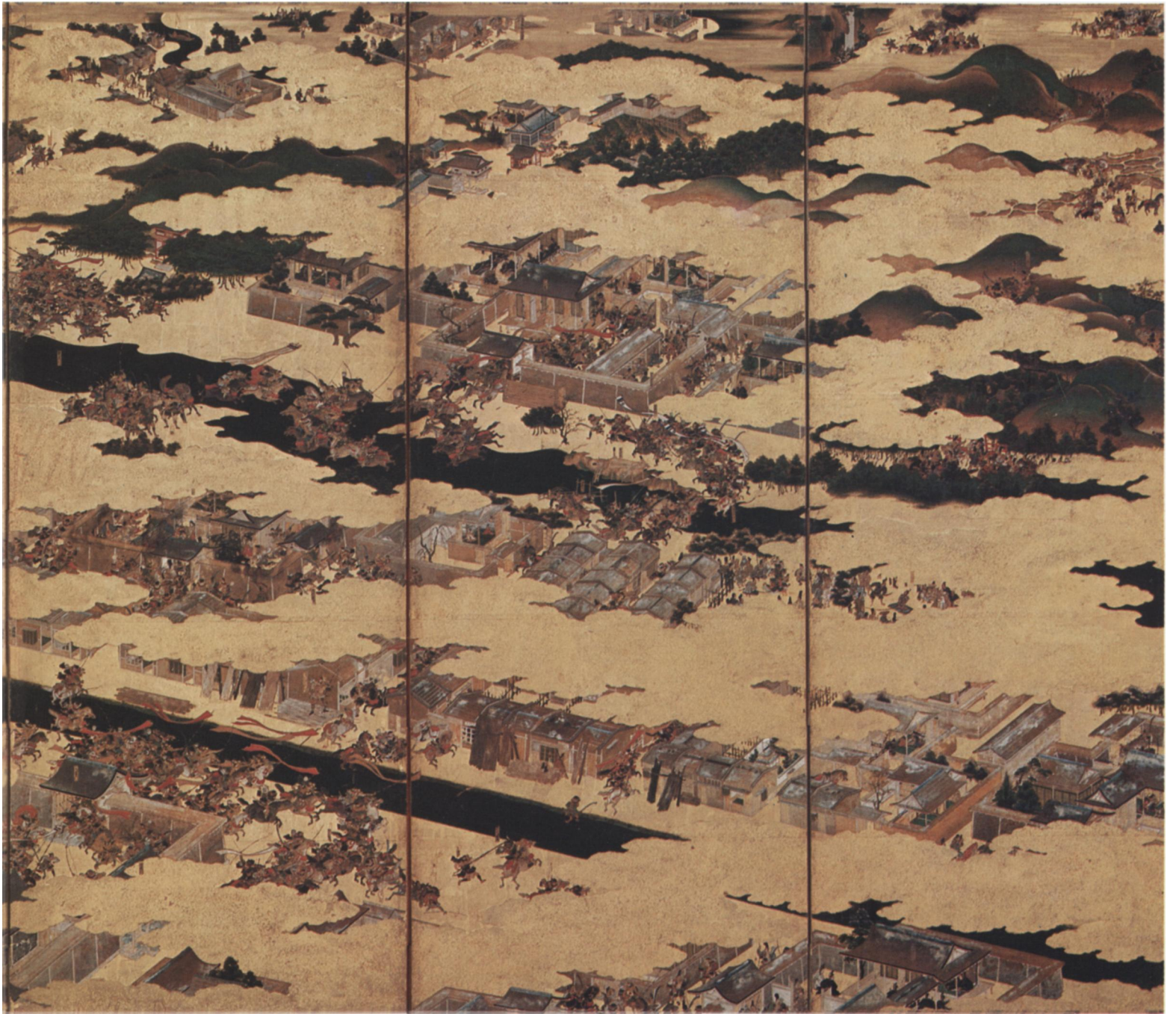


On a snowy day in January 1160 fighting broke out in the eastern suburbs of Kyoto. The story of the fierce battles of the Heiji insurrection, between samurai troops of the Taira clan (identified by their red banners) and those of the Minamoto faction (with white banners), is told here in nearly eighty separate episodes. The Imperial Palace (lower left) faces the Rokuhara mansion of the victorious Taira (upper right). Between them (at the center of the third panel) and flanked by the Kamo River and the Horikawa Canal, lies the flaming Sanjō Palace of the abdicated emperor Go-Shirakawa.

At the center of the far left panel is the Kurama Temple, in the hills north of Kyoto, the setting for an episode that foreshadows the eventual triumph of the Minamoto some twenty years later. It was here that the great Minamoto general Yoshitsune — only a boy at the time of these insurrections — grew up in seclusion. The detail on p. 15 shows him practicing martial arts by night in a lonely ravine inhabited by goblins, and, on the veranda of the temple, meeting the rich gold merchant Kichiji, who will help him flee to the north and avenge his clan.











With his Sanjō Palace besieged and in flames, Go-Shirakawa is taken away in a carriage. Terrified ladies-in-waiting, young girls, and courtiers run screaming into the courtyard, where they are shot by arrows and hacked to death. Many jump into the wooden well, at the upper left edge, hoping to save themselves

In the scene below, which takes place on the eastern bank of the Kamo River, Minamoto troops (left), fleeing after their unsuccessful attack on the Rokuhara mansion of the Taira, are soundly defeated by the enemy. A cartouche at the top identifies Sasaki Genzō, whose horse has been wounded by an arrow. In the center, the mounted general attacking with a sword is identified as Izawa Shiro, who killed eighteen men during this bloody last stand







*Utsusemi's carriage from the third panel*

*The Tale of Genji* is a long romantic novel, in fifty-four chapters, written about the year 1000 by Murasaki Shikibu, a lady-in-waiting to the empress. It is set in the mid-Heian period, the tenth century, Japan's golden age, when great wealth and power were concentrated in the hands of a small group of highly cultivated aristocrats whose primary concern seems to have been the pursuit of beauty and of each other. Murasaki examines the complex relationships of these men and women—in particular, the passion, jealousy, and frustration brought on by their endless love affairs. Scenes from the novel are recurring themes in Japanese art, for there has rarely been a time when the educated elite was not nostalgic for the charms of Prince Genji, the amorous hero, who fell in love with a remarkable number of women over the years but was never fickle.

This painting illustrates a poignant episode from the chapter “A Meeting at the Frontier.” Utsusemi, an unhappily married lady of only middle rank, had once been courted briefly by the highborn Genji. Now she is returning to the capital with her husband, a vice-governor who has been stationed for several years in the distant provinces. At the frontier barrier, in the hills east of Kyoto, her small party unexpectedly encounters Genji setting out on a pilgrimage with a large crowd of retainers. His out-runners clear the road, and Utsusemi is forced to pull her carriage off to the side and unyoke her ox. The members of the party sit in the shade of cryptomeria trees on the autumn hillside while waiting for Genji's colorful, slow-moving entourage to proceed through the barrier gate. Genji sends her a hasty message, and both their hearts beat faster as they think back on what had passed between them so long ago.

Neither of the protagonists is visible here. Conforming to strict Heian codes of behavior, they remain discreetly hidden behind the bamboo blinds of their carriages. Classical standards of physical beauty are invoked as well. For example, the clean-shaven, ideal-

ized, and virtually expressionless white faces of the formally attired patrician youths in Genji's party contrast with the more realistically drawn attendants, who carry swords and long-handled umbrellas.

The artist, Tosa Mitsuyoshi (1539–1613), was adopted into a family of official court artists who specialized in classical themes in a detailed miniature style suited to albums and handscrolls. The prestige of the Tosa school declined along with the old aristocracy during the power struggles of the sixteenth century. As Mitsuyoshi had no court title or position, he moved to the nearby port of Sakai in search of the patronage of a newly rich merchant class. There, he found himself competing with the younger, innovative Kano school artists whose grand wall paintings captivated the rulers of the Momoyama period (1568–1614). He had to adapt his delicate album-leaf paintings to suit the scale of castle walls. This is an enlarged version of a scene in Mitsuyoshi's *Genji* album in the Kyoto National Museum. The album, an imperial commission, dates from the last years of his life, and the Metropolitan Museum's panels can reasonably be ascribed to the same time, about 1610.

The painting, now a four-panel screen, was once a set of sliding doors. Clues to its original function are its unusual width and the oval paper patches over holes left by the metal pulls (visible at the left edge, opposite). Together with another set of remounted doors in the Metropolitan Museum's collection, it probably formed a continuous series of *Genji* scenes enclosing a room.



*Genji's carriage from the second panel*



*In this scene from The Tale of Genji two former lovers meet at a frontier barrier on the outskirts of Kyoto. In keeping with codes of etiquette that circumscribed the life of the upper classes, both remain hidden from the eyes of strangers inside their ox-drawn carriages. These huge and ponderous conveyances were the most decorous, if not the speediest, mode of transport for Heian aristocracy. Horses were ridden by members of the Imperial Guards and messengers. Although*

*carriages lurched along bumpy country roads at only about two miles an hour, causing intense discomfort to occupants seated on thin straw mats, their size and number of attendants, allotted by rank, remained important status symbols throughout the Heian period.*

*According to an inscription in the left-hand corner, the panel at the far left is a replacement by the artist's grandson, Tosa Mitsuoki (1617-1691)*









*Detail of the Buddhist temple compound*

The ruling military class and merchant elite who brought peace and prosperity to Japan by the early 1600s, after centuries of disunity and civil wars, introduced a new kind of painting. The idealized landscapes and great romances and battles of the past gave way to popular genre scenes by anonymous local artists showing the bourgeois, pleasure-loving citizens of Kyoto enjoying the good life. Here, a holiday spirit animates the diverse crowd gathered at the gate of a Shinto shrine, one of many set among the waterways and bamboo groves in the eastern suburbs of the capital.

Men and women from every strata of society rub elbows in this candid close-up of everyday life in early seventeenth-century Japan. On the bridge a servant carries containers of food and drink suspended from a pole over his shoulder. The dignified old man with a staff who has just crossed the bridge is probably a well-to-do merchant; he does not wear the short and long swords that set apart the strutting young samurai. A farmer carrying a cloth bundle on a pole passes under the gate, just ahead of two portly women, whose outer robes are pulled over their heads in the manner customary for highborn ladies away from home.

A tobacconist, whose wares are prominently displayed outside the gate, weighs a packet of finely chopped tobacco on his scales. Whole leaves are piled in a straw basket near his right knee, and a rack of long-stemmed pipes is displayed at his left. His whetstone, knife, chopping block, and charcoal container are arranged in front of him. The Portuguese introduced tobacco toward the end of the sixteenth century, and soon most Japanese men and women were smoking pipes, despite the government's vain attempt, in 1609, to ban the use of tobacco on the grounds that it was unsanitary.

Food vendors are also doing a thriving business. Near the bridge hungry customers squat to devour small salted fish. (One fellow in a black jacket picks his teeth,

discreetly shielding his mouth.) The next vendor offers steamed clams (realistically painted in a raised-relief technique). At the far right a customer points out his choice of fresh fish, and at the lower left balls of caramelized sweets are cooked in a hibachi and served in lacquer bowls. Inside the gate a woman seated behind another open-air stand sells sticks of candy to a young man who wraps them in the sleeves of his kimono.

The festive scene appears on the right side of a two-panel screen; on the left there are glimpses of the residential section of the eastern suburbs and a small Buddhist temple compound. In the detail of the temple precincts (above, at the left) a priest and worshipers hurry past the scripture storehouse and bell tower to a service in the main hall.

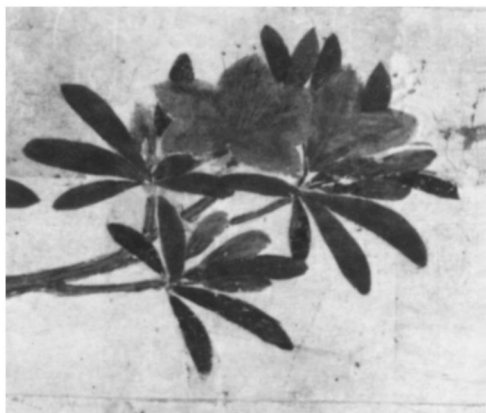
The painting survives in a fragmentary state. As in the preceding screen, the panels are exceptionally wide and have traces of door pulls, indicating that they were once sliding doors. In recent times these two panels (the second and fourth of a set of four) were converted into a folding screen. Because they were not originally adjacent, the mounter eased the abrupt transition between the halves of the newly created screen by painting trees and buildings along the central hinge. His handiwork can be seen at the left edge above the shrine gate, where he has painted over the original grasses and gold ground.





*Detail of the shrine gate*





*Azalea from the fourth panel*

The rotted trunk of even the oldest plum will blossom in the first month of spring, defiantly sending up long green shoots. This gnarled old tree, symbol of fortitude and rejuvenation, once stretched its stark and angular silhouette the length of an entire room of a Zen temple. It formed part of a continuous painting that probably featured one dramatically enlarged tree on each of the four sides of the room. At the right edge of the composition, a vertical cluster of rocks firmly establishes one corner, where the pink blossoms of a double plum reach around from the adjacent side. At the far left, red and white azalea of late spring protrude from a third side, hinting at an ongoing sequence of seasonal imagery, a progression from spring to summer.

The artist is thought to be Kano Sansetsu (1590–1651), who has until recently been overshadowed by his more famous teacher and father-in-law, Kano Sanraku. In 1631 they worked together on the paintings for the abbot's quarters of the Tenkyū-in, a small temple within the compound of Myōshin-ji in Kyoto; the brilliant design of Pheasant and Plum Tree on the sliding doors at the back of the southwest room (see p. 4) is now attributed to Sansetsu. In its abstraction and stylized mannerism it foreshadows the frozen grandeur of *The Old Plum*, probably painted at the end of Sansetsu's career for one of the reception rooms of the abbot's residence in the Tenshō-in, which adjoined the Tenkyū-in.

The Tenshō-in was built in 1647, and it is likely that its door panels were completed at the same time. Also in 1647 the court honored Sansetsu with the prestigious title of Hokkyō ("Bridge of the Law"), a high award for a painter. Despite this apparent success and public recognition, Sansetsu's last years were troubled by his imprisonment for a crime of which he believed himself innocent. Some think that this tragic experience may have hastened his death. In any case, his late works, including *The Old Plum* with its showy and exaggerated contortions, are

increasingly novel and eccentric.

The Tenshō-in is said to have parted with the doors about 1886 in order to raise funds for reconstruction of portions of the building that were damaged by a fire, which supposedly occurred after the doors had been placed in storage for the summer. They passed through the hands of several private collectors in Kyoto, one of whom must have cut them down to fit the smaller scale of his home and added new black lacquer frames and decorative metal fittings. (The present pulls are larger and a few inches lower than the original ones.) On the other sides of the doors, facing into the central room of the abbot's quarters, there were paintings of Chinese Taoist immortals in a garden. These were removed by the last owner and are now in the collection of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts.

In its original state the plum tree was probably not cropped at the top, and thus would have seemed less cramped. Similarly, although the panels join perfectly at the very center of the composition, close examination shows that there is at least one foot of painting missing between the first and second panels and between the third and fourth. This alteration changed the composition in subtle ways; for example, it made the rock at the left appear bulky and obtrusive because the space to its right has been considerably reduced.



*Detail of the Old Plum from the second panel*



*This set of sliding doors separated two reception rooms in the abbot's quarters of a Zen temple in Kyoto. Making the best use of the shape of the small rectangular room, the artist anchored his composition at the corners with massive rock clusters and filled the intervening expanse of gold leaf with the incredibly contorted image of a gnarled old plum. Pink blossoms at the far right belong to a second plum tree that probably thrust in the opposite direction on the adjacent side of the room*









*Bird from the left screen*

A mischievous flock of sparrows, buntings, finches, and quail on this pair of screens cheerfully descends to feast on a field of millet ripening against the golden glow of an autumn sky. Long sprays of wild white asters mingle artfully with the russet brown grain, and, at the far right (detail opposite), a few gossamer stalks of ragwort have already gone to seed.

At either end of this idyllic scene are bamboo poles from which an optimistic farmer has strung a light rope for scarecrow rattles, bits of bamboo that strike a wooden plaque. Judging by the swelling crescendo of fluttering wings on the left screen (pp. 38-39), where many of the birds head straight for the farmer's rope, the age-old deterrent is having no visible effect.

A background of gold leaf heightens the rich warmth of the autumn coloring. Even the sloping hill, the only link between the foregrounds of the two halves, is represented by a lighter shade of gold leaf. So much gold creates an undefined and abstract space, but the artist makes clever use of net and bamboo fences to contain the loose flight of the birds and to balance his composition. The two halves do not match exactly at the center and were probably not meant to be closely joined.

The diminutive scale of this pair of eight-fold screens (they are barely three feet high) would be suitable for a private home. Their relaxed and gentle mood is in striking contrast to the awesome majesty of *The Old Plum* (no. 5), designed to confront visitors in the reception hall of a Zen monastery.

Despite their differences, these two paintings are actually very close in date, and are both the work of Kano school artists active in Kyoto during the second quarter of the seventeenth century. Each of the *Autumn Millet* screens bears two seals of Kano Sanraku (1559-1635), the teacher of Kano Sansetsu, to whom *The Old Plum* is attributed. Sanraku was considered the best painter of the school even during his lifetime, and there are countless works, such as this one, to which his seals have been added at a later date. Nonetheless, many elements of his quiet and graceful style are evident here. The harmoniously echoing curves of the long leaves of the millet stalks are characteristic of his work, and so, too, is the loving attention to the small and precisely drawn details of nature. For example, each of the hundreds of yellow and white seeds on the pendant heads of grain is painted in painstaking relief, as if to add even more weight to the heavily laden stalks.



*Millet, ragwort, and bamboo from the right screen*



*The flight of the birds from right to left across both screens is like the continuous narrative that unfolds the length of a traditional handscroll. On the right screen, shown here, the movement is slow and stately in comparison with the bustle of activity on the left (pp. 38-39)*

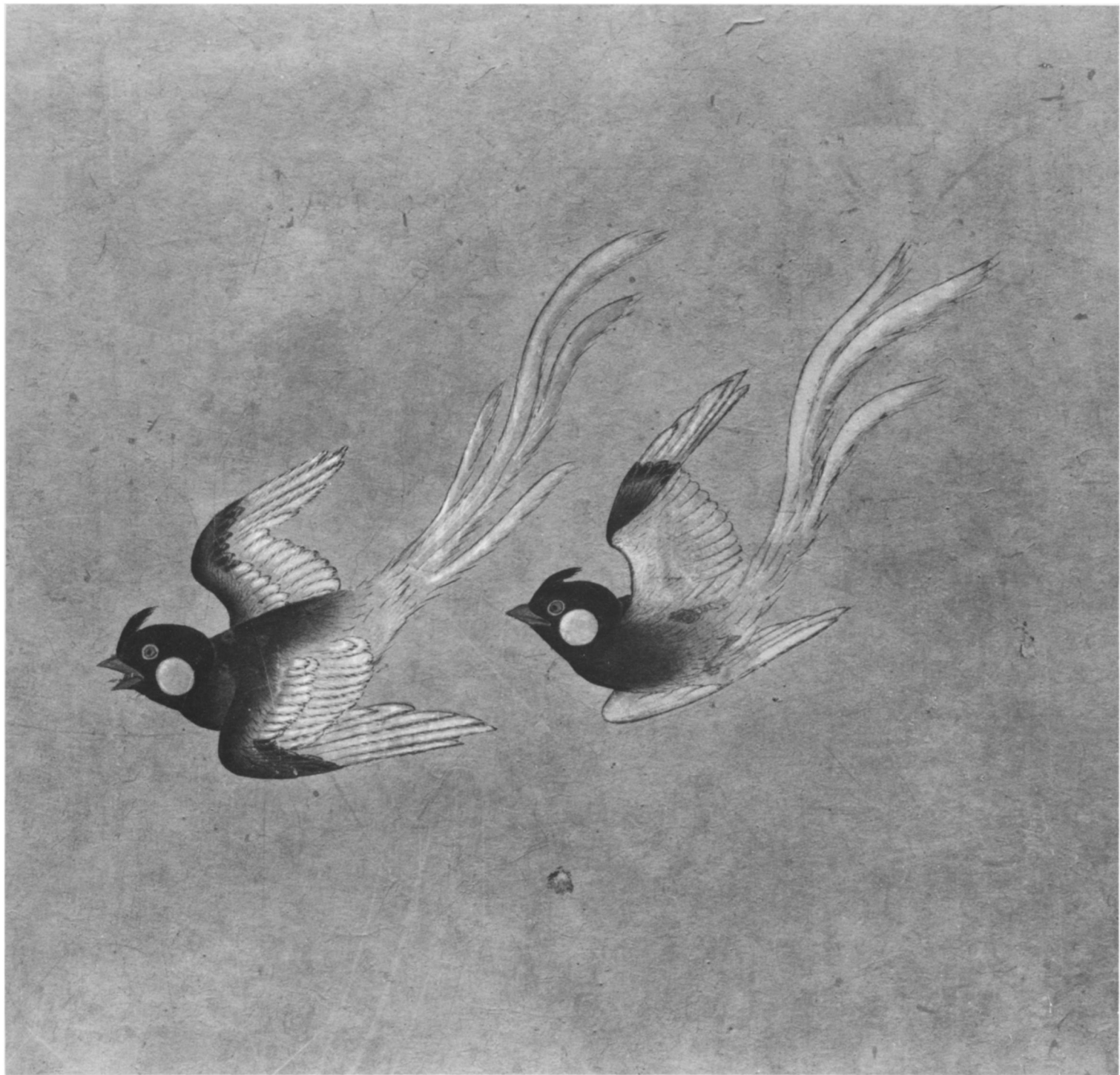






*The artist was obviously not constrained by the need for accuracy of ornithological detail; with a delightful touch of whimsy, he added a pair of purely imaginary long-tailed birds to his merry flock that includes sparrows (left) and quail (center)*







*The feathered flock swells to a climax on the left screen, where there are nearly twice as many birds. Their flight is contained by the steeply rising diagonal of a bamboo fence*









Masked dancer from the left screen

Masked dancers in rich brocades bend to the rhythm of high-pitched woodwinds and stamp their feet to the resonant thud of massive ornate drums and gongs; sixty-six figures perform twenty-two separate Bugaku dances across this pair of over-size screens. On each, eleven groups are captured in their most characteristic poses against an uninterrupted expanse of gold leaf, an abstract setting without stage or audience.

Bugaku is an ancient tradition of awe-some dignity and refinement that has its roots in Indian, Central Asian, Chinese, Korean, and Manchurian dances. Popular in the cosmopolitan T'ang Chinese capital during the seventh and eighth centuries, these exotic dances were soon imported into Japan. Bugaku thrived with the ardent patronage and participation of young noblemen at the Heian court of the eleventh and twelfth centuries and has miraculously survived into modern times despite long intervals of neglect.

The Bugaku repertoire contains many dances for groups of four, including Shinnō Hajinraku, shown at the right, a Chinese sword dance celebrating victorious military exploits. Ryō-ō, associated with Buddhist rain ceremonies, is a pantomime of Indian origin for a soloist wearing a dragon mask (see detail at the left). In *The Tale of Genji* we read that young courtiers watching a performance of Ryō-ō under the blossoming cherry trees at dawn on a spring morning were so electrified by its lively, rapid steps that they stripped off their own cloaks and heaped them at the feet of the dancer and musicians.

Hanabusa Itchō (1652–1724), made his reputation in Edo (now Tokyo) as a free-spirited painter of witty and sensitive genre scenes characterized by fluid brushstrokes and light ink washes. His best work in this style was done after 1709, the year he returned to Edo after many years of political exile. In a handful of his late paintings, Itchō unexpectedly reverted to the formal com-

positions, aristocratic themes, and bright colors favored by his first teacher, Kano Yasunobu (1613–1685), a leader of the conservative Edo Kano school. The style of the Metropolitan's screens accords with other works dating from Itchō's old age, perhaps as late as 1720; the signatures and seals are also those he adopted after his return from exile. In fact, Itchō was clearly inspired by a nearly identical pair of Bugaku screens that his teacher Yasunobu executed in the 1660s or 70s. These, known for years only in photographs, have been discovered recently in a private collection near the Museum.

Yasunobu's Bugaku screens are in turn faithfully copied from another seventeenth-century set that must trace their origins back to even earlier models. In Edo period Japan a popular composition was often repeated many times over the years at the specific request of merchants or the ruling military elite, eager to emulate the taste of their colleagues. It is typical of the independent-minded Itchō, however, that he did not slavishly imitate his teacher: he introduced several new dances, and eliminated or rearranged others. On the reverse of these screens the artist broke all bonds of restraint, and painted funny, frolicking lions in broad strokes of ink.



Sword dance from the right screen



Eleven separate Bugaku dances, with the number of performers ranging from one to groups of four, fill the left screen of this oversize pair. Musicians stand behind the huge hanging drum and gong, while the rest of the seated ensemble plays a small drum, flutes, and a mouth organ. Bugaku screens had been fashionable in both temples and at court since at least the 15th century, although no early examples survive. This early 18th-century pair was probably commissioned by a rich merchant or military ruler eager to acquire the traditional trappings of the aristocracy











*The Karyōbin (left) is a dance of Indian origin performed by boys wearing bird-wing capes and cherry-blossom crowns. They dance with graceful jumps while striking tiny cymbals held in both hands. The eerie, high-pitched sound evokes the song of the Kalavinka, a legendary bird with a melodious voice said to dwell in the valleys of the Himalayas. In Buddhist depictions of*

*the Western Paradise, this magical creature is shown with the body of a bird and a human head.*

*The Karyōbin is paired in the Bugaku repertoire with the Kochō, or butterfly dance, also the domain of children in fanciful winged costumes. On the right screen (below) the two dances are shown accordingly, in close proximity on adjacent panels*







*Kōrin's signature and seal from the right panel*

This twofold screen of mighty waves breaking in a rough sea has long been acclaimed as one of the great masterpieces by Ogata Kōrin (1658–1716), and is certainly his finest painting outside Japan. Kōrin, a perfect stylist, arranged these few shapes with exquisite balance and control. The largest wave, silhouetted against a blue haze that fades mysteriously into the gold-leaf background, looms in the center distance. Highlighted with opaque white pigment that has largely worn away over the years, its frothy claw-like crests reach toward the lower-left foreground. Here, a second wave, with grotesque contours and openings reminiscent of the bizarre shapes of a Chinese rock, shudders as it rolls back in the opposite direction, and finally surges toward the droplet in the lower-right corner.

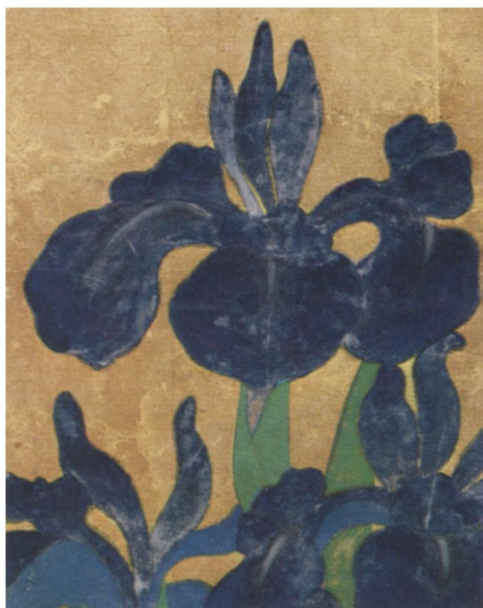
The artist probably held two brushes at once to make the sweeping parallel lines that give strength and volume to the water. Uneven outlines and loose wavering strokes suggest the jumpy irregularity of waves in a storm. The mood is ominous and disquieting. It is unusual to see this dark side of Kōrin's personality, and the painting may reflect the artist's unhappy state of mind during his brief self-exile in Edo between 1704 and 1711. The circular seal (detail), reading "Dōsū," which Kōrin impressed beneath his signature with a liquid red pigment, is one he is known to have used after 1704.

During this period of his career, Kōrin's style revealed his deepening understanding of the early seventeenth-century artist Tawaraya Sōtatsu, whom he revered and whose screens he owned and copied. The Metropolitan Museum's painting closely resembles one portion of Sōtatsu's exuberant ink monochrome screen, in the Freer Gallery of Art, showing a dragon arising from turbulent seas.

Whatever the source of inspiration, the isolation and enlargement of a small patch of the swelling seas was a theme that continually attracted both Kōrin and his contemporaries. It may have had its roots in a more widespread undercurrent of unrest pervading Japanese society. This was an age marked by a series of natural disasters—typhoons, floods, and famine—and by threats of economic depression. At the same time, merchants, shopkeepers, and craftsmen thrived on a materialistic and self-indulgent craving for novelty. Whether drawn on women's robes, lacquer writing boxes, or even ceramic dishes, waves were the perfect symbol of this new plebeian culture: they evoked the ever-changing instability of the *ukiyo*, "the floating world" of momentary pleasures.







*Iris and detail of the bridge from the right screen*

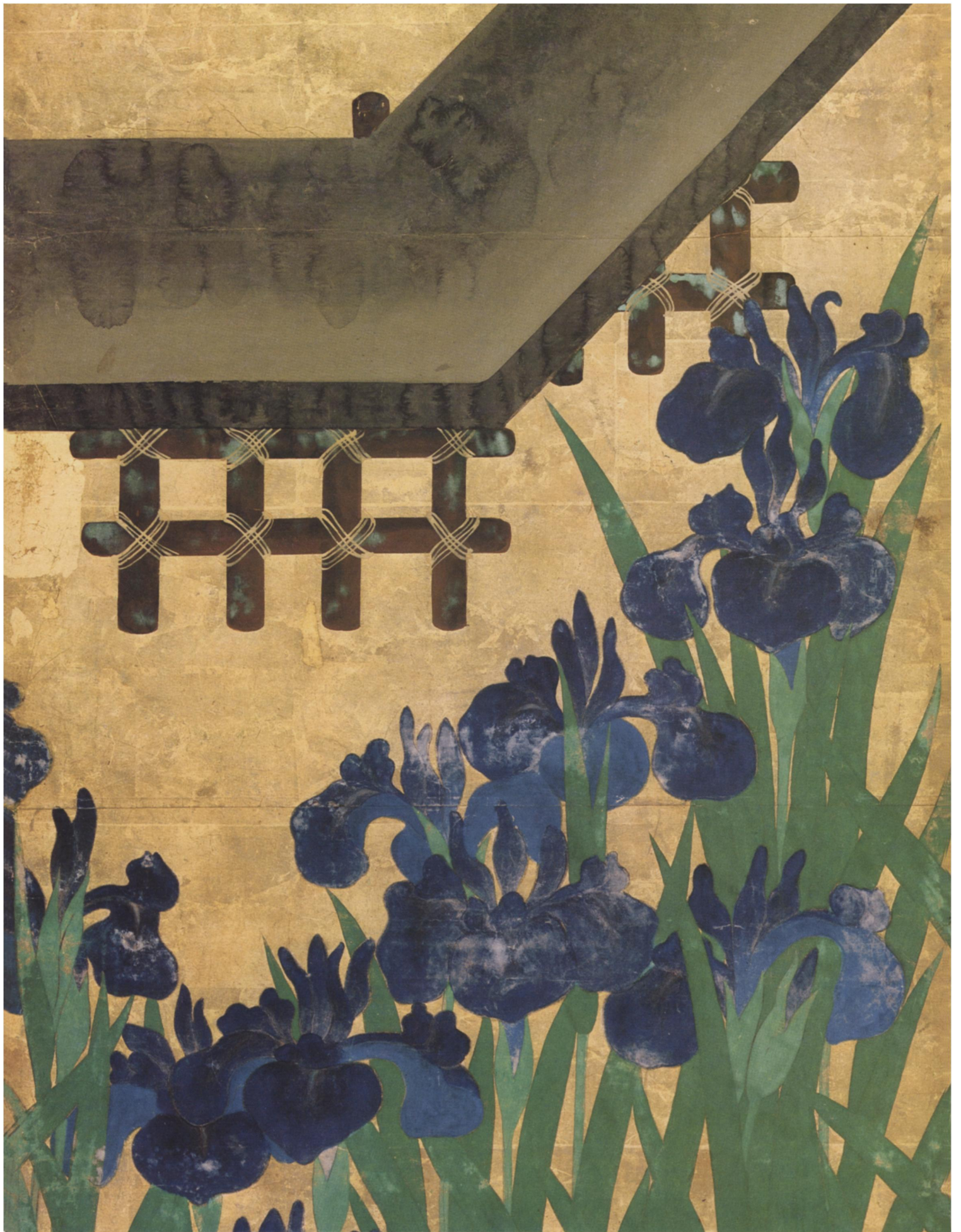
Iris blooming in stately elegance at the water's edge evoke the lush beauty of early summer. The artist of these screens, Ogata Kōrin, was fascinated by iris, which he painted often in many media. One of his most sublime creations is an earlier pair of iris screens, in the Nezu Museum, Tokyo, very similar to these but lacking the bridge. The bridge is the clue to the painting's real subject, one immediately familiar to a Japanese viewer. It alludes to a passage from the tenth-century *Tales of Ise*, a collection of romantic poetic episodes centering on the life of the fashionable courtier Narihira.

Banished to the eastern provinces following his indiscretion with a high-ranking lady of the court, Narihira and his traveling companions stop en route at a place called Yatsushashi ("Eight-plank Bridge"), so-named because there the river branched into eight channels, each with a bridge. The sight of the iris blooming luxuriantly in the marshes occasions nostalgic regret for friends left behind in the capital. Kōrin may have seen in this story a parallel to his own condition. Raised among the wealthy and cultural elite of Kyoto, he lived the carefree existence of a talented but profligate playboy until, at the age of forty, he found himself bankrupt and reduced to pawning the family treasures. He turned to painting as a career, and in search of clients was forced, in 1704, to travel east to Edo. There, restless and unhappy, he longed for the refined lifestyle of the capital.

The bridge is as crucial to the composition as it is to the theme. It drops in a sweeping diagonal from the upper right to link the two disparate halves of the screen—the unified and steady procession of iris at the right and the more complex arrangement that unfolds above the bridge at the left. To compensate for the sudden disappearance of the last plank, at the center of the left screen, the deep blue blossoms are gathered together in a particularly rich cluster. The straight, sharp edge of the bridge sets off the varied shapes and curves of the blossoms, while the muted gray planks, mottled with puddles of rainwater, contrast with intense hues of azurite blue and malachite green.

The entire composition comes to life quite unexpectedly when the screen is standing with its panels slightly folded in accordion style. The clever interplay between the in-and-out rhythm of the folds and the alternating diagonal and horizontal planks makes the bridge seem three-dimensional.

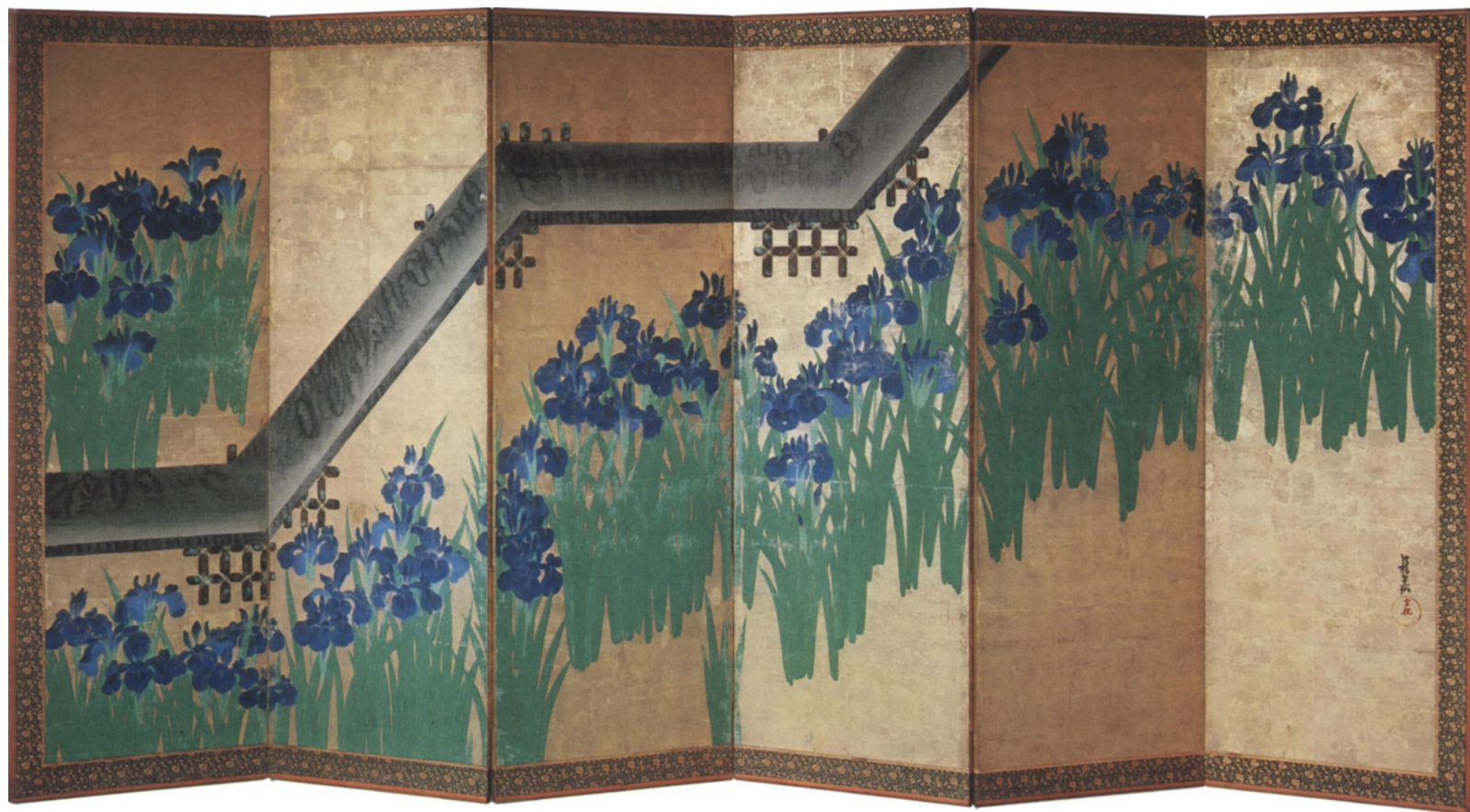






*When the 10th-century poet Narihira and his traveling companions arrived at a place called Yatsushashi ("Eight-plank Bridge"), they dismounted to eat a simple meal of rice and enjoy the view of iris blooming luxuriantly in the marshy waters. That view comes to life in dramatic fashion when this pair of 18th-century screens stands slightly folded as they are here*









*Boat and detail of the cliff from the left screen*

It would be difficult to find a more unconventional and expressive landscape in the entire history of Japanese painting than this pair of screens. The fantastically eroded and towering cliff on the left screen (pp. 54–55) is extreme even for the painter Nagasawa Rosetsu, who was known to flaunt his talents so shamelessly that he stood out even in an age when Japanese culture was rampant with eccentrics. Rosetsu was born in 1754, the son of an impoverished samurai, but his talent was such that by the age of twenty-eight he was ranked as one of the four top artists in Kyoto. Much of his best work, however, was done for provincial temples on the Kii Peninsula, southwest of the capital, where his witty compositions must have seemed both shocking and marvelously funny. On occasion his humor was colored with darker overtones. Here, above the tiny boat running before the wind, the ominous cliff hovers like a huge and hungry beast.

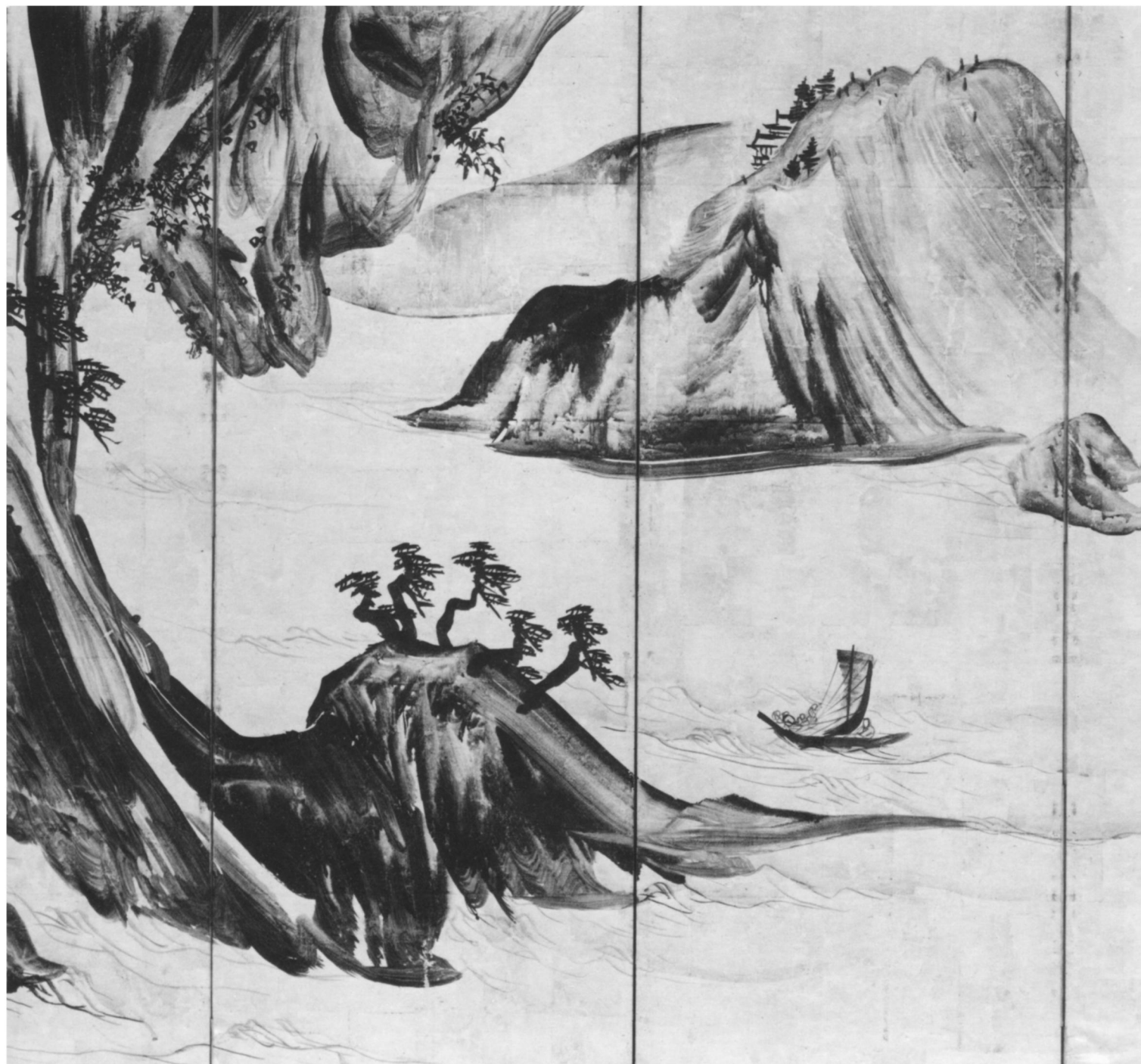
The screens are a tour de force of swift and intuitive brushwork. Jet black ink applied with a wide flat-edge brush seems to slide and cascade across the nonabsorbent gold-leaf surface with breathtaking speed and flawless self-assurance. Dark shadows emerge where ink is puddled wet on wet, and shapes recede into the distance in a way that reveals keen interest in Western shading and perspective.

The subject of this pair is ambiguous. Perhaps, the boat on the left screen carries the great Chinese poet Su Tung-p'o (1037–1101) past the foot of the Red Cliff, where he composed his most famous prose poem. The grottoes and stalactite formations resemble those Rosetsu used on another occasion in a much more literal rendering of the Visit to the Red Cliff. On the right screen a Chinese recluse, wearing his scholar's veil, is served wine in his thatched hermitage by the seashore (see pp. 56–57). The rustic retreat, with its rows of barren willow trees, suggests that he is T'ao Yüan-ming (365–427), a revered poet who withdrew from official life to a country house among

willows and plum trees. On the other hand, the recluse and his attendants may simply be looking out to sea in anticipation of the arrival of the man seated in the bow of the distant boat. The picturesque rocky coastline of the Kii Peninsula could have inspired the landscape setting.

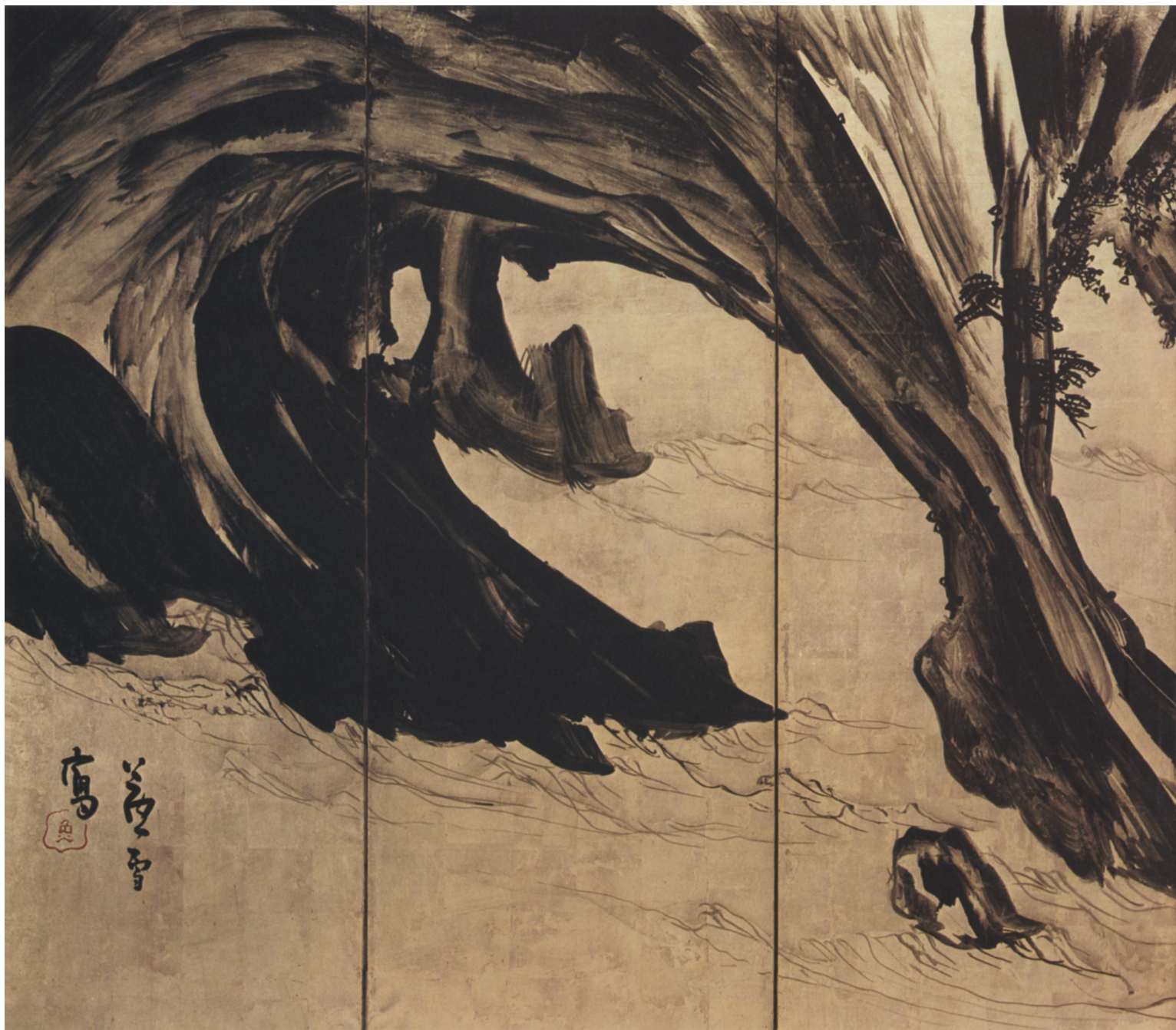
The artist signed his name "Rosetsu of Kyoto" in the abbreviated cursive script associated with his last years. Following his signature, located at the outside edge of both screens, he impressed his favorite red seal, one he may have carved himself (see inside front and back covers). It is a large relief seal in the shape of a tortoise shell enclosing the character Gyo ("Fish"). He used it so frequently that sometime between 1792 and 1794 the upper-right corner of the bordering line broke off, a condition apparent on both of these screens.

Rosetsu died mysteriously during a trip to Osaka in 1799 at the age of forty-five. As early as the nineteenth century scholars reported that his death was unnatural, and there are stories that he was poisoned by a jealous rival. The real cause of his death will never be known, of course, but it does seem possible that he may have been too clever and arrogant for his peers.

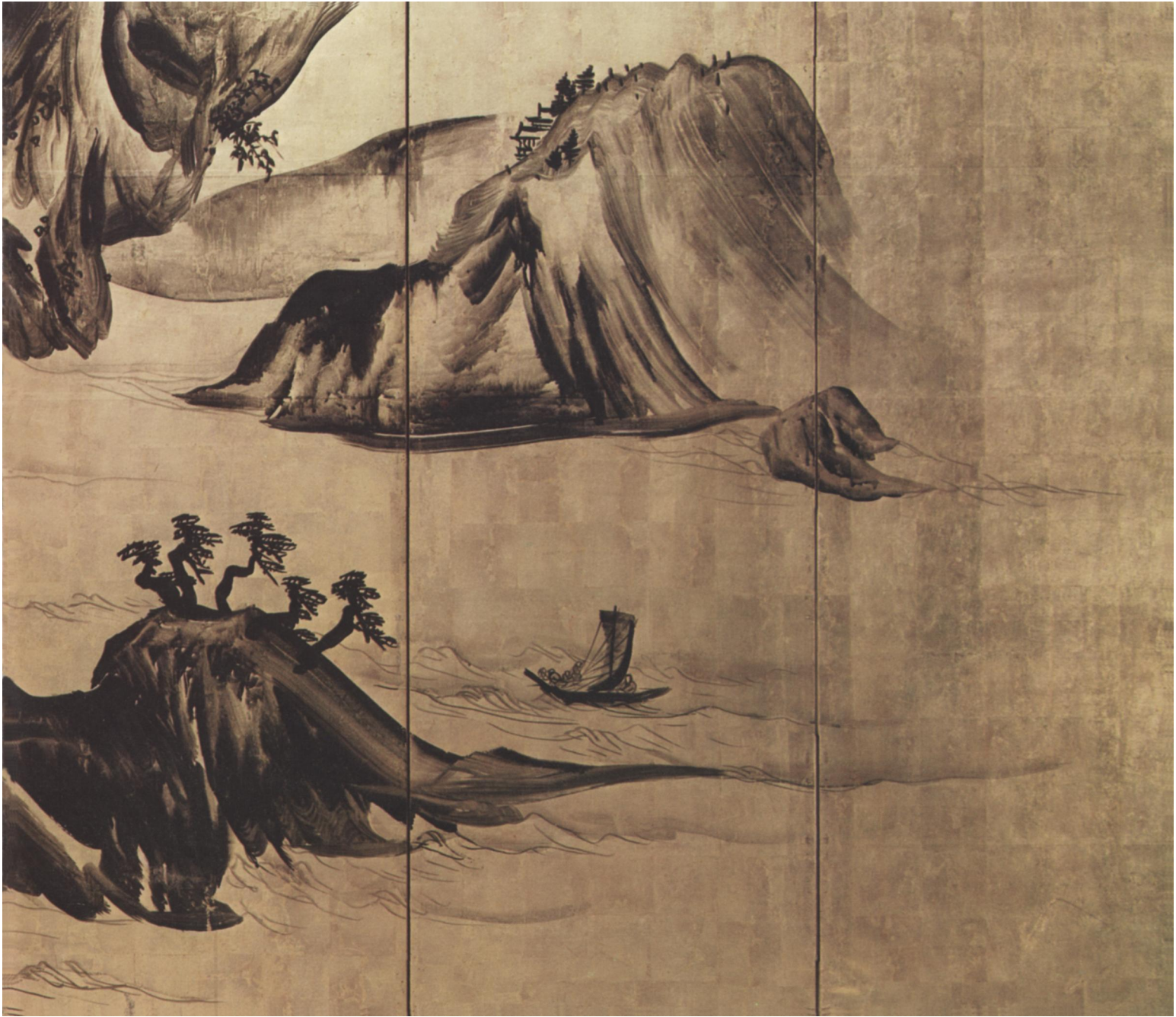




*The dramatic intensity of the jet black coastal cliff in the left screen is heightened by its disturbing shape reminiscent of a huge beast of prey, with a large snout and sinister eyes, gazing down onto the seemingly helpless crew of a tiny boat that is driven past its foot*



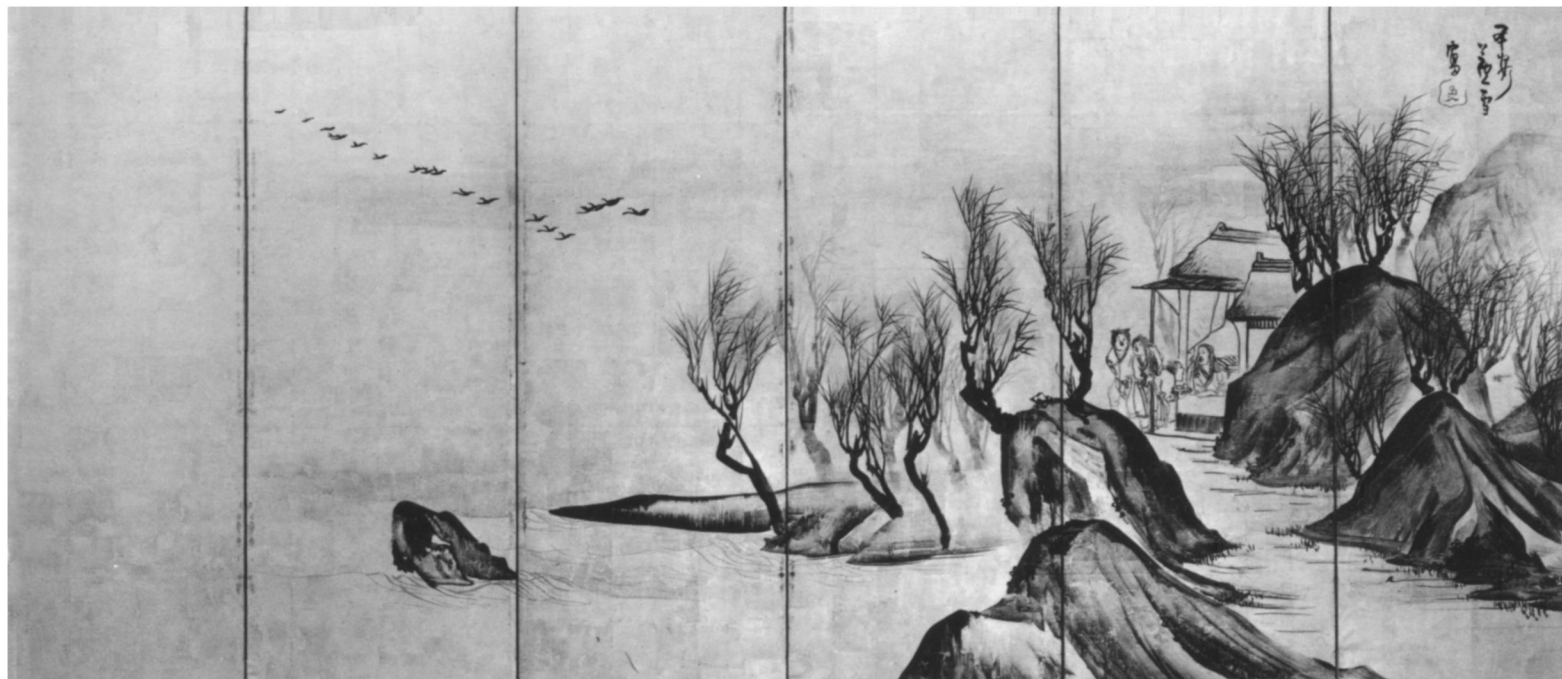








*In the right screen a path leads to the thatched seaside hermitage of a Chinese poet-recluse, who is being served wine by his boy attendants. They seem to await the passenger arriving in the distant boat on the left screen. The quiet mood of this painting makes an interesting contrast to the unbridled bravura of the other*







*Persimmons from the left panel*

The love of nature runs through all of Japanese art and literature, and for the painter and poet it is the passing of the seasons that evokes the strongest emotions. When the witty tenth-century court lady Sei Shōnagon wrote her *Pillow Book*, a wonderful compilation of anecdotes and observations, she listed the following under the heading “Things That Do Not Linger for a Moment”:

A boat with hoisted sails.  
People's age.  
The Four Seasons.<sup>4</sup>

The seasons are by no means of equal interest, however. Summer in Japan is uncomfortably hot and muggy, and winter is dreary and cold. Spring and autumn are traditionally the most meaningful. The falling of the cherry blossoms and the scattering of autumn leaves—these things are particularly poignant, since they suggest so keenly the passing of time and the brevity of our own lives.

According to its inscription, this twofold screen was painted in the late autumn of 1816. The solitary persimmon tree, bent and brittle with age, has already lost most of its leaves. At the center a cluster of red fruit hangs heavy and overripe from a branch so frail that it seems to have snapped under the weight. Below, grow two stalks of withered pampas grass and a few sparse weeds. The tree is crisply silhouetted against an unpainted paper ground that suggests the cold sky of a clear November day. The artist, Sakai Hōitsu (1761–1828), used this subject often on hanging scrolls and folding fans, but never with the severity he displays here. The asymmetrical composition may have been complemented originally by a plum or cherry tree of early spring on a right-hand screen.

Hōitsu was born into a rich and powerful samurai family in Edo, and had all the advantages of the finest education in poetry (he was an accomplished haiku poet), Nō drama, tea ceremony, and painting. Per-

haps out of a desire to escape his administrative duties in the clan hierarchy, and to pursue his own interests, he became a fully tonsured monk in 1797, and adopted the Buddhist name Monsen Kishin that appears in the seal and signature of this screen. He moved to Kyoto for a few years, and then returned to Edo in 1809 to form his own painting workshop and to immerse himself in the study of the life and art of Ogata Kōrin (see nos. 8, 9). His attraction to Kōrin, whose style he consciously sought to revive, is explained by the fact that a century earlier Hōitsu's family had been among Kōrin's chief patrons, and numerous masterpieces by Kōrin were still preserved in their collection.

Hōitsu shares Kōrin's preference for the poetic imagery of nature and for elegant designs, but his compositions are more delicate and show greater sensitivity to graceful shapes. The intricately twisting, curling leaves of the tree and the grasses are painted with characteristically light and fluid touches of the brush.







*Insect from the left panel*

The evening moon shines—  
Here, in the garden white with dew  
The crickets sing, alas!  
Burdening my weary heart.<sup>5</sup>

Prince Yuhara, 8th century, *Manyōshū*  
("Collection for Myriad Generations")

Autumn, with its melancholy mood and its aura of sadness, grief, loneliness, and even death, has always evoked a sense of regret for the passing of time. On this two-panel screen, a variety of autumn grasses and flowers touched with dewdrops are brushed in ink, with grasshoppers and crickets painted in lacquer against a muted ground of silver leaf. The plain paper ground has been left in reserve for the full moon. A few strokes of ink wash cross the surface of the moon to suggest a light haze. It is an image that recalls the words of Yoshida Kenkō, in the late fourteenth century, in his *Tsurezuregusa* ("Essays in Idleness"): "The autumn moon is incomparably beautiful. Any man who supposes the moon is always the same, regardless of the season, and is therefore unable to detect the difference in autumn, must be exceedingly insensitive!"<sup>6</sup>

This screen is the finest known from the hand of the nineteenth-century artist Shibata Zeshin (1807–1891). Zeshin began his prolific and versatile career at eleven as an apprentice to a lacquer craftsman. A master of design, he was soon acclaimed as the leading artist in this painstaking and time-consuming medium. His lacquer boxes, dazzling in their technical virtuosity, are still the most highly coveted by Western collectors. Zeshin went on to train as a painter in a naturalistic style that shows clearly the growing influence of European realism. His success may be measured by the fact that his clients included not only prominent businessmen and government officials, but the emperor himself.

It was in his old age, during the 1870s and 80s, that Zeshin added an unusual new technique to his repertoire. In response to the popularity of oils in the Meiji period (1868–1912), Zeshin began to paint with lacquer on both paper and wooden panels. One such framed panel with a realistic scene of Mount Fuji won a prize at the 1872 Vienna World's Exposition. The naturally dark colors and thick lustrous surface texture of the lacquer added to the illusion of Western pigments.

The seal on Autumn Grasses, reading "Tairyūkyō" ("Home opposite the Willows" —the name of his studio in Edo), is one the artist is said to have used after 1872, when he had reached sixty-five. Here, the use of lacquer is restricted to the shiny black and brown bodies of the insects. Considering the difficulty of working with lacquer, a viscous and sticky substance, the artist's patience and skill in recreating the most delicate details are almost unimaginable. Against the softly blurred tones of the ink painting, the crickets and grasshoppers stand out with startling, almost playful clarity. As a finishing touch, a silver pigment was spattered at random over the grasses to create dewdrops glistening in the moonlight.

This intimate close-up of nature, suggesting a low window opening onto a garden, is appropriate to the diminutive scale of the screen, which is just over two feet tall. Screens of this size may be used to set off a space around the kettle and brazier in the corner of the room where a host sits to prepare tea for his guests. In any case, this painting was surely favored for moonlit evenings in autumn.



*Full moon from the right panel*



*Against a muted ground of silver leaf, a variety of autumn grasses and flowers, touched with silvery dewdrops, are brushed in ink, with grasshoppers and crickets painted in shiny black and brown lacquer. The plain paper ground has been left in reserve for the full moon*









# Twelve Japanese Screens

## NOTES

1. *The Pillow Book of Sei Shōnagon*, translated and edited by Ivan Morris (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 26

2. *Ibid.*, p. 117

3. Ihara Saikaku, *The Japanese Family Storehouse*, translated by C. W. Sargent (Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 38

4. *Pillow Book*, p. 210

5. *The Manyōshū*: The Nippon Gakujutsu Shinkōkai Translation of *One Thousand Poems* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), p. 87

6. *Essays in Idleness: The Tsurezuregusa of Kenkō*, translated by Donald Keene (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), p. 175

1. Landscape of the Four Seasons. Each screen, 68½ x 146 inches. Signature: "Kangaku Shinsō hitsu" on both screens. Seal: "Shinsō" on both screens. Gift of John D. Rockefeller, Jr., 41.59.1, 2

2. The Battles of Hōgen and Heiji. Each screen, 60½ x 140½ inches. Rogers Fund, 57.156.4, 5

3. A Meeting at the Frontier. 65½ x 140 inches. Purchase, Fletcher Fund, 55.94.2

4. The Shrine Gate. 60 x 64½ inches. Gift of A. I. Sherr, 60.164

5. The Old Plum. 68½ x 191½ inches. The Harry G. C. Packard Collection of Asian Art, Gift of Harry G. C. Packard, and Purchase, Fletcher, Rogers, Harris Brisbane Dick, and Louis V. Bell Funds, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, and The Annenberg Fund, Inc. Gift, 1975.268.48

6. Autumn Millet. Each screen, 33½ x 134½ inches. Seals: "Shuri" and "Mitsuyori" on both screens. Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 57.157.1, 2

7. Bugaku Dances. Each screen, 72½ x 177½ inches. Signature: "Hokusō-ō Hanabusa Itchō" on right screen; "Hokusō-ō Itchō" on left screen. Seal: "Shuzai San-un Senseki Kan" on both screens. The Harry G. C. Packard Collection of Asian Art, Gift of Harry G. C. Packard, and Purchase, Fletcher, Rogers, Harris Brisbane Dick, and Louis V. Bell Funds, Joseph Pulitzer Be-

quest, and The Annenberg Fund, Inc. Gift, 1975.268.57, 58

8. Rough Waves. 57½ x 65½ inches. Signature: "Hokkyō Kōrin." Seal: "Dōsū." Fletcher Fund, 26.117

9. Yatsunashi. Each screen, 70½ x 146½ inches. Signature: "Seisei Kōrin" on right screen; "Hokkyō Kōrin" on left screen. Seal: "Hōshuku" on both screens. Purchase, Louisa E. McBurney Gift Fund, 53.7.1, 2

10. Rocky Coast and Chinese Figures. Each screen, 67½ x 146¾ inches. Signatures: "Heian Rosetsu Sha" on right screen; "Rosetsu Sha" on left screen. Seal: "Gyo" on both screens. The Harry G. C. Packard Collection of Asian Art, Gift of Harry G. C. Packard, and Purchase, Fletcher, Rogers, Harris Brisbane Dick, and Louis V. Bell Funds, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, and The Annenberg Fund, Inc., Gift, 1975.268.75, 76

11. The Persimmon Tree. 56½ x 64 inches. Dated: Late autumn 1816. Signature: "Hōitsu Kishin." Seal: "Monsen." Rogers Fund, 57.156.3

12. Autumn Grasses. 26½ x 69 inches. Signature: "Zeshin." Seal: "Tairyūkyō." The Harry G. C. Packard Collection of Asian Art, Gift of Harry G. C. Packard, and Purchase, Fletcher, Rogers, Harris Brisbane Dick, and Louis V. Bell Funds, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, and The Annenberg Fund, Inc. Gift, 1975.268.137



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